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POCKET ADVENTURES

NEW ZEALAND

Bette Flagler

VISIT…

POCKET ADVENTURES

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Bette Flagler

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1 2 3 4

Contents

INTRODUCTION 1
- History 2
- Government 4
- Economy 5
- People & Culture 5
- Geography & Land 6

TRAVEL INFORMATION 19
- At a Glance 19
- The Basics 20
  - When to Go 20
  - Health Concerns 21
  - Dangers & Annoyances 22
  - How Long Should I Stay? 22
  - How Much Should I Pack? 22
  - The Details 23
- Getting Here 25
- Getting Around 26
- Communications 29
- Opening Hours 31
- New Zealand Post 31
- Food 31
- Traveling With Kids 33
- Holidays 34
- Money Matters 37
- Accommodation 38
- Adventures 42
  - Tramping 43
  - Rafting 46
  - Kayaking & Canoeing 47
  - Jet-Boating 47
  - Sailing 47
  - Skydiving 48
  - Scenic Flights 48
  - Horse Trekking 48
  - Mountain Biking 48
  - Bungy Jumping 49

NORTH ISLAND 51

AUCKLAND 51
- Introduction 51
- Getting Here 54
- Information Sources 55
- Auckland Central City 56
  - Getting Around 57
  - Adventures 58
  - Sightseeing 60
  - Where to Stay 61
  - Where to Eat 63
- North of Auckland 65
  - Adventures 66
- Hauraki Gulf Islands 68

Waiheke Island 69
NORTHLAND 73
- Introduction 73
- Getting Here 76
- Information Sources 76
- The Kauri Coast 77
  - Matakohe 78
  - Dargaville 79
  - Baylys Beach 81
  - Kai Iwi Lakes 82
  - Kauri Forests 82
  - Hokianga Harbour 84
  - Rawene 86
- The Far North 87
  - Ahipara 87
  - Kaitaia 89
  - Doubtless Bay 94
- The Bay of Islands 95
  - Kerikeri 96
  - Paihia & Russell 98
  - On the Road to Tutukaka 105
  - Tutukaka 105
  - Whangarei 106
  - Whangarei to Warkworth 106

WAIKATO 109
- Introduction 109
- Getting Here 109
- Information Sources 110
- Hamilton 110
  - Tourist Information 110
  - Where to Stay 111
  - Where to Eat 111
- All Around Hamilton 111
  - Information Sources 111
  - Adventures 114
  - Sightseeing 114
  - Where to Stay 115
  - Where to Eat 115
- Waitomo 115
  - Getting Here 116
  - Information 116
  - Adventures 116
  - Where to Stay 117
  - Where to Eat 118

ROTORUA 119
- Introduction 119
- Getting Here 119
- Information Sources 120
- Adventures 120
  - In Maori Culture 120
  - Thermal Reserves 124
  - Spas 126
  - On Water 127
  - On Foot 129
  - On Bikes 129
  - On Horses & the Farm 130

With Adrenaline . . . 130
In the Air . . . 131
■ Sightseeing . . . 131
■ Where to Stay . . . 132
■ Where to Eat . . . 134
THE CENTRAL PLATEAU . . . 137
■ Introduction . . . 137
■ Getting Here . . . 137
■ Getting Around . . . 138
■ Information Sources . . . 138
■ Lake Taupo & Around . . . 139
Information Sources . . . 139
Adventures . . . 139
Cultural Activities . . . 146
Thermal Activities . . . 147
Sightseeing . . . 148
Where to Stay . . . 148
Where to Eat . . . 150
■ Turangi & Tokaanu . . . 150
Information Sources . . . 150
Adventures . . . 151
Where to Stay . . . 152
Where to Eat . . . 152
■ Tongariro National Park . . . 152
Getting Around . . . 153
Information Sources . . . 153
Adventures . . . 153
Sightseeing . . . 157
Where to Stay . . . 157
Where to Eat . . . 158
■ Ohakune . . . 159
Information Sources . . . 159
Adventures . . . 160
Where to Stay . . . 162
Where to Eat . . . 162
HAWKE'S BAY . . . 163
■ Introduction . . . 163
■ Getting Here . . . 163
■ Information Sources . . . 164
■ Napier, Hastings & Havelock North . . . 164
Information Sources . . . 165
Adventures . . . 166
Sightseeing . . . 171
Where to Stay . . . 171
Where to Eat . . . 173
MANAWATU . . . 175
■ Introduction . . . 175
■ Getting Here . . . 175
■ Information Sources . . . 176
■ State Highway 1 . . . 176
■ Horowhenua . . . 177
Adventures . . . 177
■ Palmerston North . . . 177
Information Sources . . . 178
Adventures . . . 178
Sightseeing . . . 179

Where to Stay . . . 180
Where to Eat . . . 181
WELLINGTON . . . 183
- Introduction . . . 183
- Getting Here . . . 184
- Information Sources . . . 185
- Adventures . . . 186
  - On Water . . . 186
  - On Foot . . . 186
  - Watchable Wildlife . . . 187
- Sightseeing . . . 188
- Where to Stay . . . 190
- Where to Eat . . . 191
- Hutt Valley . . . 192
  - Getting Here . . . 192
  - Information . . . 193
  - Adventures . . . 193
  - Sightseeing . . . 194
- Wairarapa . . . 196
  - Getting Here . . . 196
  - Information Sources . . . 196
- Martinborough . . . 196
  - Tourist Information . . . 197
  - Adventures . . . 197
  - Where to Stay . . . 199
  - Where to Eat . . . 199
- Kapiti Coast . . . 200
  - Getting Here . . . 201
  - Information Sources . . . 201
  - Otaki . . . 202
  - Waikanae . . . 203
  - Paraparaumu . . . 204

SOUTH ISLAND . . . 207

MARLBOROUGH . . . 207
- Introduction . . . 207
- Getting Here . . . 208
- Information Sources . . . 209
- Picton . . . 211
  - Information Sources . . . 211
  - Adventures . . . 211
  - Where to Stay . . . 219
  - Where to Eat . . . 221
- Blenheim, Renwick & the Wine Country . . . 221
  - Information Sources . . . 222
  - Adventures . . . 222
  - Where to Stay . . . 225
  - Where to Eat . . . 227
- Havelock & West . . . 227
  - Adventures . . . 228
  - Where to Stay . . . 230
  - Where to Eat . . . 230

NELSON . . . 231
- Introduction . . . 231
- Getting Here . . . 234
- Information Sources . . . 235

- Nelson & Around . . . 235
  - Adventures . . . 236
  - Sightseeing . . . 239
  - Where to Stay . . . 240
  - Where to Eat . . . 242
- Nelson to Farewell Spit . . . 242
  - Mapua . . . 242
  - Motueka . . . 243
  - Takaka & Golden Bay . . . 246
  - Collingwood & Farewell Spit . . . 249
- Abel Tasman National Park . . . 252
  - Getting Here . . . 252
  - Adventures . . . 253
  - Where to Stay . . . 256
  - Where to Eat . . . 258
- Kahurangi National Park . . . 258
  - Getting Here . . . 259
  - Information Sources . . . 259
  - Great Walks . . . 259
- Nelson Lakes National Park . . . 261
  - Getting Here . . . 262
  - Information Sources . . . 262
  - Walks . . . 262
  - Where to Stay in St. Arnaud . . . 263
- Murchison . . . 263
  - Information Sources . . . 263
  - Adventures . . . 263
  - Where to Stay . . . 264
  - Where to Eat . . . 264

WEST COAST . . . 265
- Introduction . . . 265
- Getting Here . . . 269
- Information Sources . . . 269
- The Buller Gorge to Westport . . . 270
- Inland to Greymouth . . . 270
  - Getting Here . . . 270
  - Information Sources . . . 271
  - Where to Stay . . . 271
  - Where to Eat . . . 271
- Westport North to Karamea . . . 271
  - Getting Here . . . 272
  - Information Sources . . . 272
  - Walks . . . 272
  - Where to Stay . . . 273
  - Where to Eat . . . 273
- Westport . . . 274
  - Getting Here . . . 274
  - Information Sources . . . 275
  - Adventures . . . 275
  - Where to Stay . . . 276
  - Where to Eat . . . 276
- Punakaiki & Paparoa National Park . . . 277
  - Information Sources . . . 278
  - Adventures . . . 278
  - Where to Stay . . . 279
  - Where to Eat . . . 280
- Punakaiki to Greymouth . . . 280

- Greymouth . . . 280
  - Getting Here . . . 281
  - Information Sources . . . 282
  - Adventures . . . 282
  - Where to Stay . . . 283
  - Where to Eat . . . 283
- From Greymouth to Hokitika . . . 283
- Hokitika . . . 284
  - Getting Here . . . 284
  - Information Sources . . . 285
  - Adventures . . . 285
  - Where to Stay . . . 286
  - Where to Eat . . . 287
- Hokitika to the Glaciers . . . 287
  - Information Sources . . . 287
  - Sightseeing . . . 287
  - Where to Stay . . . 290
  - Where to Eat . . . 290
- The Glaciers . . . 291
  - Getting Here . . . 295
  - Information Sources . . . 295
  - Franz Josef . . . 295
  - Fox . . . 297
- The Glaciers to Haast . . . 299
  - Getting Here . . . 300
  - Information Sources . . . 300
  - Adventures . . . 300
  - Sightseeing . . . 301
  - Where to Stay . . . 301
  - Where to Eat . . . 302
- The Haast Pass . . . 302

CANTERBURY . . . 305

- Introduction . . . 305
- Christchurch . . . 306
  - Getting Here . . . 308
  - Getting Around . . . 309
  - Information Sources . . . 309
  - Adventures . . . 310
  - Sightseeing . . . 312
  - Where to Stay . . . 314
  - Where to Eat . . . 315
- Kaikoura . . . 316
  - Getting Here . . . 318
  - Information Sources . . . 318
  - Adventures . . . 319
  - Sightseeing . . . 321
  - Where to Stay . . . 322
  - Where to Eat . . . 323
- Hurunui . . . 323
  - Getting Here . . . 324
  - Information Sources . . . 324
  - Adventures . . . 324
  - Where to Stay . . . 327
  - Where to Eat . . . 328
- West to the Lewis Pass . . . 328
- Selwyn District . . . 329
  - Information Sources . . . 330

Adventures . . . 330
Where to Stay . . . 332
Where to Eat . . . 332
■ Ashburton . . . 333
■ Central South Island . . . 333
Getting Here . . . 334
Information Sources . . . 334
Adventures . . . 334
■ Mackenzie Country & Aoraki/Mt. Cook . . . 335
Lake Tekapo . . . 336
Aoraki/Mt. Cook . . . 339
OTAGO . . . 343
■ Introduction . . . 343
■ Information Sources . . . 343
■ Dunedin . . . 343
Getting Here . . . 344
Tourist Information . . . 345
Adventures . . . 346
Sightseeing . . . 347
Where to Stay . . . 349
Where to Eat . . . 353
■ Otago Peninsula . . . 354
Adventures . . . 354
Sightseeing . . . 357
Where to Stay . . . 358
Where to Eat . . . 359
■ Queenstown . . . 359
Getting Here . . . 360
Information . . . 361
Adventures . . . 361
Sightseeing . . . 370
Where to Stay . . . 371
Where to Eat . . . 372
■ Arrowtown . . . 373
Where to Stay . . . 374
Where to Eat . . . 375
■ Wanaka . . . 375
Getting Here . . . 377
Information Sources . . . 377
Adventures . . . 378
Sightseeing . . . 385
Where to Stay . . . 386
Where to Eat . . . 387
■ Central Otago . . . 388
Adventures . . . 388
Cromwell . . . 390
Alexandra . . . 391
Clyde . . . 392
■ Dunedin to Central Otago & the Roxburgh Valley . . . 393
Information Sources . . . 394
Places to Stay . . . 394
Where to Eat . . . 394
■ The Maniototo or “Plain of Blood” . . . 394
Getting Here . . . 395
Information Sources . . . 395
Ranfurly . . . 396
Naseby & Dansey’s Pass . . . 396

Ranfurly to Alexandra 399
- Coastal Otago 400
  - Watchable Wildlife 400
  - Where to Stay 401
  - Where to Eat 402
- Oamaru 402
  - Information Sources 402
  - Adventures 403
  - Sightseeing 403
  - Where to Stay 404
  - Where to Eat 405
- Waitaki 405
  - Information Sources 406
  - Sightseeing 406
  - Where to Stay 407

FIORDLAND 409
- Introduction 409
- Getting Here 412
- Information Sources 413
  - Emergency Services 413
- Adventures 413
  - Watchable Wildlife 413
  - On Water 414
  - On Foot 418
  - On the Road 424
  - On Horses 424
  - On the Farm 425
  - In the Air 425
- Where to Stay 426
  - Te Anau 426
  - Milford Sound 427
  - Manapouri 427
- Where to Eat in Te Anau 427
- Maori Language 428
- Kiwi English 429

INDEX 431

MAPS
- Auckland 52
- Auckland City 56
- Northland 74
- Central West Coast 112
- Rotorua 122
- Central Plateau 142
- Hawke's Bay 166
- Wellington & Hutt Valley 182
- Wellington City 195
- Marlborough 210
- Nelson to Cape Farewell 232
- Northern Alps 266
- Southern Alps 268
- Canterbury 304
- Otago 350
- Fiordland 408

Introduction

IN THIS CHAPTER

- History 2
- Government 4
- Economy 5
- People & Culture 5
- Geography & Land 6

The islands that make up New Zealand are mere dots on the bottom of the globe. This is a small place, far from the rest of the world. But what a delightful small place it is! Traveling around New Zealand, I often feel like the very best bits and pieces of the world were put together and all the extra land and people were removed. It's a gentle place and traveling here is easy: the language is English, the food is familiar and the people are friendly. There are mountains and rivers, wineries and farmers' markets. You can find walking tracks that will take five minutes or two weeks and you'll find kayaks, horses and helicopters, all ready to carry you off to spectacular places.

Putting together this Pocket Guide was a painful undertaking. This book is intended for visitors to New Zealand who don't have much time – the ones who want to see the highlights and get a taste of the country. In order to distill New Zealand into a short book, I was forced to remove some of the farther-flung locations and, in so doing, some of my favorite regions were left behind. But the fact is this: if you're coming to New Zealand for one or two weeks, you're not likely, for example, to get to Taranaki or the Coromandel Peninsula. You won't, probably, spend much time on the North Island at all because the iconic sights and activities of New Zealand are on the South Island. And you won't, most likely, have time to explore the Catlins or Stewart Island. But you'll still have a great time and your camera will be bulging with photos. If, however, you have more time, or want to come back and explore the rest of the country, pick up a copy of my *New Zealand Adventure Guide*.

The best time to come to New Zealand is from October to April and my favorite months are February and March. Try to avoid Christmas – that's when most Kiwi families take their holiday; places get filled up and often accommodation rates increase.

Activities You Should Not Miss:

- *Splurge on a helicopter trip. My favorite is from Wanaka.*

- *Kayak the Queen Charlotte or Abel Tasman sounds.*
- *Swim with the dolphins in Kaikoura.*
- *Eat a lot of fresh produce and drink a lot of New Zealand wine.*
- *Go on a multi-day tramp (backpacking trip) and stay in a hut.*
- *Do a full-day guided tour on Franz Josef glacier.*
- *Go to Milford Sound. Preferably in a kayak.*
- *Ride a bike to Macetown or a horse into the high country.*

History

LANDT Bezyde en Ontdeckt met de Schoepen
Heuskerk en de Zeehaen onder het Commando van den
TASMAN in den Jaare 1642. Den 13 December.

Abel Tasman's ships

Apart from Antarctica, New Zealand was the last major land mass to be settled by man. The land that we call New Zealand evolved following the separation of the Rangitata Land Mass from the ancient super continent of Gondwanaland – some 80 million years ago. Separation forces continued for 20 million years until the Tasman Sea reached its current width and the land mass continued to experience changes until as little as five million years ago, when the current shape of the two islands began to take form. During this time of development, New Zealand lived in isolation and, as recently as 7,000 years ago, most of New Zealand was covered in rainforest. Protected by the sea, New Zealand developed a unique flora and fauna and, within the perfectly safe forest, birds lost their ability to fly. Sadly, the discovery of New Zealand by man – first the Maori and the Moriori, and then the Europeans – changed everything. The Maori were skilled hunters and fishermen and brought rats, dogs, fire and Stone-Age weapons. The Europeans brought disease, agriculture, more weapons, intrusive flora and more fauna. The New Zealand we know today, while beautiful, is a shadow of what it must have been only 1,000 years ago.

AD 900-1000: Maori arrive from Hawaiki; the Moriori arrive on the Chatham Islands (800 km/500 miles east of Christchurch).

1642: Dutch explorer Abel Tasman spotted land on the West Coast of the South Island and gave it the name "Staten Landt," referring to the "Land of the Dutch States-General." He anchored in Golden Bay (near Nelson) and had a bloody and deadly encounter with the local Maori. Tasman and his crew left New Zealand, having never set foot on land.

1769: British Captain James Cook arrived in Poverty Bay (near Gisborne) on the *Endeavour.* Fighting ended with the death of local Maori, but Cook continued to explore the North and South Islands.

1772: Frenchman Jean-Francois-Marie de Surville arrived in Doubtless Bay (in Northland).

1773, 1777: Cook returned to New Zealand on board the *Resolution.*

1791: British Lieutenant Broughton arrived on the Chatham Islands.

1790s: Europeans arrived en masse – whalers, sealers and missionaries.

1800: Maori population reached its peak of 100,000 but intertribal warfare and cannibalism began to take their toll.

1814: Missionary Samuel Marsden establishes Christianity in New Zealand; intertribal warfare declined and cannibalism became a thing of the past.

1835: Maori from Wellington invaded the Chatham Islands and claimed the islands as their own.

1839: European population reaches about 2,000.

1840: The Treaty of Waitangi signed, making New Zealand a British colony. The treaty, an agreement between the British Crown and the Maori chiefs, guaranteed that the Maori would remain in control of their land, fisheries and culture. But, in exchange, they would lose sovereignty.

1840-1860: Over 40,000 Europeans living in New Zealand.

1840-1860: New Zealand wars between Europeans and Maori.

1893: New Zealand becomes the first country in the world to give women the right to vote.

1900: Over half a million Europeans lived in New Zealand.

1907: New Zealand gained Dominion status within the British Empire.

1931: New Zealand granted autonomy.

1935: Labour government elected, which brought a 40-hour work week and state-funded health and welfare systems.

1947: The Statute of Westminster formally accepted.

1950: The New Zealand economy enjoys full employment and increased export demand.

1960-1970s: A severe labor shortage saw New Zealand turning to the Pacific Islands for manpower. Auckland became the largest Polynesian city in the world.

1970s-1980s: The New Zealand economy deteriorates, resulting in previously unheard of unemployment.

1980s: Labour Government is elected and deregulates industry, removes government subsidies and privatization of some government departments.

Government

New Zealand is a constitutional monarchy and the Head of State is Her Majesty, Elizabeth II, Queen of England. The government is a representative democracy, modeled after the British parliamentary system. There is a Prime Minister (currently Helen Clark), a leader of the opposition (currently Doctor Don Brash), and a resident Governor-General (currently Dame Silvia Cartwright) who is the representative of the British monarch.

The Prime Minister and the Members of Parliament (MPs) are elected by general election (voting age is 18) every three years. Parliament is New Zealand's House of Representatives. The Prime Minister and Ministers of the Crown make up the Cabinet – Cabinet members are MPs.

Since a 1993 election reform, New Zealand has followed a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system. The country is divided into electorates, and under the MMP, voters have two votes: one is for *individuals* to represent their electorate as an MP, the other is for political *parties*. There are 120 seats in Parliament – 61 are general electorates, six are Maori electorates, and 53 are "list MPs" – seated to parties based on the percentage of votes the party received. Following an election, if one political party gains more than half of the seats in Parliament, it can form a majority government. If no party has more than half the seats, two or more parties (with a combined majority) can form a majority coalition government. For a party to win seats in Parliament, it needs to have won at least 5% of the party votes. How many seats it gets depends on the percentage of votes received – for example, if the National Party won 30% of the vote, they would get 36 seats.

Clark is a member of the Labour Party (established in 1916, it is New Zealand's oldest) and Brash is a member of the National Party (established in the 1930s).

Economy

Traditionally, New Zealand's primary economy has been agricultural – and farming has centered around sheep and cattle. The meat industry is a big earner (80% of all meat produced is exported) and New Zealand is the world's largest producer of crossbred wool. Dairy is the largest single industry (over 30% of agricultural production) and dairy giant Fonterra is the largest exporting company. Sheep numbers have dropped over the last 20 years – from around 70 million in 1982 to 40 million. The whole of agriculture (including fisheries) contributes 60% of New Zealand's total export earnings and over half of all land is used for farming.

New Zealand is set for a shift in its economy, though, as it moves from the primary sector of agriculture to an economy based on talent and ideas. The Government's Growth for Innovation Framework (GIF) was released in 2003 and targeted three industries – biotechnology, ICT (information and communication technology), and the creative sector (including the arts of fashion, design, screen production and music) – as key potential contributors to the future economic growth and international competitiveness of the country.

People & Culture

POPULATION BREAKDOWN BY ORIGIN

- *75.8% European descent*
- *13.8% Maori*
- *5.3% Pacific Island*
- *4.5% Asian*

The day-to-day culture of New Zealand is not so different from that of other primarily English-speaking countries. When my sister came to visit, she was surprised at how strong the British influence is, and I suppose she's got a valid point; I'm just used to it. The basics of developed cul-

ture and society are familiar – don't burp in public or spit on the streets; treat people with respect and be polite. Older New Zealanders prefer to be addressed as "Mrs" this and "Mr" that, but the younger generations are quite relaxed and easy-going.

As a visitor, I encourage you to interact with a wide variety of our population – not just those who are involved in tourism. By all means, if you are invited to someone's home or to a marae, accept the invitation. The marae is a meeting place; each marae is owned by the local Maori people and represents their ancestors and their stories. It is a very significant place and you would be honored to visit. If you have not been invited to a marae and would like to visit one, it is very important that you ask permission of the elders or caretaker.

❖ VISITING A MARAE

There are rules for visiting a marae, and depending on the nature of your visit, you may or may not partake in a full traditional welcome. Most often, a member of the local iwi or tribe will help guide you through the welcome and farewell. Do not be embarrassed to ask questions or look to your guide for assistance. Protocol varies from iwi to iwi, but always includes a powhiri or welcome, an inoi or prayer, a wero or challenge, a karanga or calling, the haka powhiri or welcome dance, the mihi or speeches, the waiata or song, the koha, or gift, the hongi, traditional form of greeting (the gentle pressing of nose and forehead) and the hakari or feast.

Geography & Land

New Zealand sits in the South Pacific Ocean, 1,900 km (1,200 miles) east of Australia and 10,000 km (6,210 miles) west of San Francisco. It lies between 34°S and 47°S and stretches for some 1,770 km (1,097 miles) in length from top to bottom (California is 770 miles long). The North and South islands are the two major landmasses, the North being 114,500 square km (44,655 square miles) in area, the South being 150,700 square km (58,773 square miles). Stewart Island, directly

south of the South Island is the third largest, with a land mass of 1,750 square km (6,825 square miles).

Did you know? *In addition to the main islands, New Zealand is also made up of many outer islands, including the Chathams, Kermadecs, Tokelau, Campbell, Auckland, Antipodes, Snares, and the Ross Dependency.*

New Zealand has long been celebrated for its clean, green image and, while a small island nation, it is rich in natural resources. It is a mountainous land – about 20% of the North Island and 65% of the South Island are mountains. The North Island, home to most of the population, has beaches, kauri forests, lakes, volcanoes and thermal areas. The South Island is punctuated by a more dramatic landscape including the mountains and glaciers of the Southern Alps, dense, lush bush and deep fiords. Approximately 50% of land is in meadows and pastures; 30% is forested and 15% is under permanent cultivation. Sheep and cattle grazing is virtually everywhere. And one of the unfortunate realities is that nearly all of New Zealand land has, at one time or another, been farmed. There is quite an effort to regenerate bush, but many stands of old-growth native trees have been lost.

Underneath New Zealand, lie two tectonic plates – the Pacific and the Indo-Australian – that are constantly shifting, grinding and sliding. The geography of the North Island is the result of both tectonic and volcanic forces. The island sits at the southern end of a subduction zone created from the sliding of the Pacific Plate under the Indo-Australian Plate and, while the hills of the Tararuas and Ruahines are a result of tectonic uplifts, the highest places on the island were produced by volcanic action. The Taupo Volcanic Zone stretches from White Island to Mt. Ruapahu, includes both dormant and active volcanoes, and dominates the Central Plateau.

The South Island is dominated by the 500-km (300-mile) spine of the Southern Alps. With the majority of weather patterns coming from across the Tasman, the western side of the Alps is punctuated with rainforest, glaciers and fast-flowing rivers; the eastern side of the Alps is home to the vast, flat Canterbury Plains and the rolling Otago farmland. We get a lot of rain in New Zealand (see Climate section, page 8) and, consequently, there is a lot of moving water, with rivers and waterfalls everywhere! Our longest river is the Waikato (425 km/

260 miles) and the longest navigable one is the Whanganui. Both are in the North Island.
Overhead, the night sky shows stars out of view in the Northern Hemisphere. The most notable difference is the presence of the Southern Cross, which is represented on our national flag. Its long axis points to the South Pole. You might also notice Orion – not only is the guy standing on his head, but his belt is just about in the water.

◆ National Parks

NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL PARKS	
Te Urewera	Arthurs Pass
Tongariro	Paparoa
Egmont	Westland
Whanganui	Aorkaki/Mt. Cook
Abel Tasman	Mount Aspiring
Kahurangi	Fiordlands
Nelson Lakes	Rakiura

Tongariro was the first national park to be established in New Zealand and only the second in the world (Yellowstone in the United States was the first). Today, our 13 national parks cover over five million acres of land – one-third of the country. In addition, we have three maritime parks – the Bay of Islands, the Hauraki Gulf and the Marlborough Sounds. The Department of Conservation (DoC) was established in 1987 with the responsibility of conserving New Zealand's natural and historic heritage. Prior to the formation of DoC, responsibilities were spread among several government agencies. DoC maintains a fabulous network of walking and tramping tracks, huts, and campsites, as well as parks, reserves and sanctuaries. Information about DoC, its projects and the park system can be found by visiting www.doc.govt.nz.

◆ Climate

New Zealand lies in an area called the "Roaring Forties," or "mid-latitudes" – meaning that we are midway between the tropics and the poles. Our weather occurs because two sources of air – warm and moist from

the tropics, and cold and dry from the poles – do not mix well. When they meet, the air from one swirls around the air from the other and causes low-pressure areas called depressions. Fronts are formed when the two conflicting air systems bang into each other.

Our weather typically comes from west to east (the predominant wind is westerly) and arrives on land after traveling over large areas of water. The predominant weather pattern comes in the form of "anticyclones." Anticyclones generally move eastward every six to seven days and are characterized by descending air, settled weather patterns, little or no rain and clear skies – they are "highs." Between these highs or anticyclones, are troughs of low pressure. These troughs are often cold, oriented from the northwest to the southeast, and bring northwesterly winds. The wind typically becomes stronger, the clouds increase and rain develops. After the rain passes, there is often a system change to cold, wet southwesterly winds.

When the systems hit the land, the mountain chains, particularly the Southern Alps, disrupt the flow of air and catch a lot of the rain. On the South Island, the western slopes are the wettest area of the country, while the eastern side is the driest. On the North Island, the mountain ranges don't extend the length of the island and the weather patterns from one side to the other are not so dramatically different.

Keep in mind: *New Zealand is in the Southern Hemisphere and it's the southerlies that are cold – there's nothing between us and Antarctica!*

In general, rainfall is spread throughout the year, but on the North Island, winter can be twice as wet as summer. The average rainfall across the country varies from 300 mm (11 inches) in one Central Otago location to over 8,000 mm (312 inches) in the Southern Alps. Most of New Zealand sees between 600 and 1,500 mm (23 to 59 inches) per year.

Did you know? *Stewart Island and Fiordland experience more than 200 rain days per year.*

While the South Island is generally a few degrees cooler than the North, temperatures remain mild throughout most of the year. Winter is from June to August, and during that time snow is expected at the higher altitudes and, occasionally, on the lower hills. Even at sea

level on the South Island, a light dusting can occur. Fruit-killing hard frosts can occur as late as November.

Tip: *When planning a trip to New Zealand, keep in mind that it is a maritime climate prone to sudden changes in weather. Always take warm clothing and be prepared for rain.*

◆ Flora

New Zealand evolved in relative isolation and 80% of its land mass was covered in forest; today, about 23% of that remains and much of that is in national parks, forests and reserves. Much of the native plant life is unique to New Zealand and 10% of our native plant species are considered endangered. So, too, are many of our native birds.

Beech forest is the predominant forest type in New Zealand, followed by podocarp. The beech comes in several species, including the silver, red, black, and mountain. As you get higher in the mountains, the leaf size and height of the trees gets smaller – the silver beech for example, is found at lower elevations, reaches heights up to 30 meters (98 feet) and diameter up to three meters (10 feet); the mountain beech grows to 22 meters (71 feet) and diameter of one meter (just over three feet).

The podocarp is ancient forest type of conifer and refers to evergreen trees that reproduce with a single pod-like seed (similar to cone-bearing pines) and pulpy fruit. The podocarps include: rimu, totara, matai, miro, and kahikatea, the white pine, which is New Zealand's tallest tree. The matai, totara and miro all have short spiky leaves (like a pine); the rimu and kahikatea have hanging, lacy leaves.

Other trees that are common in the forest include the giant kauri, perhaps our most famous trees, growing only in Northland and on the Coromandel Peninsula (see Northland chapter, page 82 ff, for information on kauri), and the yellow-flowered kowhai.

There is both a Northern and a Southern rata, and both have bright crimson-red flowers (rata is Maori for red). Ratas are found in the forest and, as a young tree, use a host tree for support. The northern rata strangles its host; the southern rata does not.

The pohutukawa also has bright red flowers, but they have more of a bottle-brush appearance and are only found naturally in the North Island. Pohutukawa are called the New Zealand Christmas Tree, due to their flowering at the end of December. (Rata flower later in the spring/summer and continue flowering longer.)

The nikau palm is found throughout the North Island and as far south as the Heaphy Track on the South Island. It is the world's southern-most palm and is fabulously beautiful, especially when seen en masse.

Tree ferns are abundant throughout the undergrowth of New Zealand forest.

The most common ferns you will see are the black tree fern or ma-maku, which can grow to 20 meters (65 feet).

The most famous tree fern is the ponga or silver fern. The silver fern is New Zealand's national symbol and the one you'll see being worn by the All Blacks (the national rugby team) and on the tail of Air New Zealand. Ponga grow to 10 meters (32 feet) high. To tell a silver fern from a black fern, look at the underside of the leaves – the silver fern is silver; the black fern is green! You can also look at the trunk where the fronds come out – on the black fern this is much darker and fuzzier.

Did you know? *The koru symbol that is commonly used in Maori art (and on the tail of Air New Zealand planes) means "New life" or "new beginning." It comes from the ferns – when a fern frond begins its growth, it comes out of the trunk as a koru – and as it unfolds, the side fronds and leaves unfold from within. Koru is a big word – with a very important and spiritual meaning. All that the new life will ever be is wrapped up inside of the koru, just waiting to grow.*

◆ Fauna

New Zealand has no native mammals, save two species of bats, and no snakes. Our fauna consist of a diverse bird population and marine mammals. Because New Zealand developed in isolation, many of its birds evolved during a threatless era and lost their ability for flight. For some this led to extinction at the hands of humans, first the Maori, then the pakeha.

Tuatara

The tuatara is a reptile that comes from the days of the dinosaur and is only found on a handful of protected offshore islands. This old guy (dating back some 200 million years) has changed little, while the rest of the world was busy evolving. You can see tuatara in captivity.

If you followed the *Lord of the Rings*, you'll know that a lot of the special effects were made by a company called Weta Workshop. The name might have seemed odd to the rest of the world, but not to those of us in New Zealand. There are four species of the weta, a wingless cricket, that lives in caves, bush and cracks in rocks. They are fairly hideous and scary looking – especially surprising when you find one in your letter box as I have – but relatively harmless.

Flightless Birds

Kiwi

The moa is one flightless species that didn't survive the immigration of man. Now extinct, this was the giant of the bird world.

The kiwi is the most famous of all New Zealand birds. It's an icon and is the nickname used for the people of New Zealand. There are six species of kiwi and within those six, several subspecies; all but the ones on Stewart Island are completely nocturnal. While varying in size, they all have in common a very long pointy nose, used for poking around the ground in search of grubs and worms. The call of the kiwi, heard at night, sounds much like a screeching baby – it can wake you up with a start from a sound sleep. These fragile brown birds are threatened and most often seen in a kiwi nocturnal house, designed to be dark during daylight hours.

Many visitors spot a weka and mistakenly believe they've seen a kiwi. It's an easy mistake, as weka are about the same size as a large kiwi and similar in color. Kiwi tend to be more on the brown side, though, whereas weka are a reddish-brown. Their legs are strong,

but a bit longer than the kiwi; their beaks are much shorter and not nearly as pointed. Weka are not particularly timid – especially in areas frequented by tourists, they can become a terrible pest, coming out of the bush when trampers arrive at a well-used lunch or break spot. And beware! They will steal your lunch right out of your backpack. These cheeky birds have no manners whatsoever.

The cartoonish takahe was believed to be extinct, but was re-discovered in the Murchison Mountains in 1948. Takahe exist today in Fiordlands and on some predator-free offshore islands, as well as in captivity. If you are lucky enough to see one, these birds are great fun to watch – their chest is a bright blue, their back is green and their short, sharp beak is orange. They have short, stocky legs and move around in a rather clucky manner.

The kakapo is the largest parrot in the world and is near extinction. Only about 60 remain and are managed by DoC on predator-free islands. It is also the only flightless parrot in the world.

Flighted Birds

The pukeko is one of the most beautifully colored of all New Zealand birds. They are deep blue, with a red beak and white under-tail feathers. You will no doubt see a pukeko or two during your travels – they are most common near swamps and lakes and seem unaware of passing vehicles. They swim, run and fly and have long legs with large feet.

In New Zealand, cormorants are generically referred to as shags. There are a few species of shag, including the king shag (only found in the Marlborough Sounds), the black shag (the largest, found on inland lakes), the spotted shag (has spots on its back and is found in the Marlborough Sounds, on the Otago and Banks peninsulas, and around Auckland), the pied shag (black and white in color, same locations as the spotted shag), and the Stewart Island shag (found between Otago and Stewart Island). Shags nest in coastal areas and, depending on type, either on overhanging rocks or in trees.

New Zealand is the first place many people see penguins. There are three species, the most common being the little blue penguin, found in coastal waters around most of New Zealand. The yellow-eyed penguin is the second-rarest penguin in the world and is sometimes seen along the coast from around Otago south. For more information about the yellow-eyed penguins, refer to the Otago chapter, page

Kaka

556. You are least likely to see the Fiordland crested penguin – it is believed to be the rarest penguin in the world and lives in very limited places (the West Coast and Fiordlands).

Fourteen species of albatross (there are 24 world-wide) live in New Zealand waters. The only mainland breeding colony for the royal albatross is on the Otago Peninsula (see that chapter, page 355, for details). These are incredible birds to watch fly, take off and land – their wing span can reach three meters (nearly 10 feet).

The West Coast is home to the world's only breeding ground of the Westland black petrel which come to land near Punakaiki only during breeding season.

Some of the big birds of the forest that you may see include the kaka (two species, one on the North Island and one on the South), a sturdy, hooked-beak fellow that is bronze and red.

The kea a greenish-brown parrot, is a character. You'll likely see kea at high-country huts or on tramps – they are very inquisitive and use their sturdy beaks to tear up rubber weather-stripping around car windows. They also beg for food.

You are much more likely to see yellow crown than red crown parakeets. The yellow-crowned birds are common in the forests of the North, South and Stewart Islands. They have a somewhat serious look to their face, and a chubby, solid-looking head, neck and chest.

The morepork is more often heard than seen. This is the native owl of New Zealand and is named for the sound of its call (similar to "mopoke").

Another bird you'll hear first is the New Zealand pigeon, but it's not the call that you'll hear. When these birds are flying, their wings make a loud, "*whooomp*, *whooomp*, *whoomp*" sound – you can't miss it. These birds are large and brightly colored – green on their backs and heads, white on their underside.

One of the smaller forest birds that you'll likely see is the fantail. These birds seem friendly and flirty, as they follow trampers and walkers through the bush. But what they're really after is the bugs you

stir up by walking through the forest. Fantails eat on the wing and are dark brown and white (though some appear black).

Another small bird is the brownish-green rifleman. They are most common in mountain beech forests, but can be seen in lowland shrub as well.

Tui

The North Island and South Island bush robins are friendly, chubby little guys who in certain areas seem completely unfussed by the presence of humans. Much smaller than robins in North America, the bush robin may even walk across your shoes if you stand perfectly still. The Chatham Island robin was on the brink of extinction, but following an heroic DoC effort (using other birds such as tomtits as foster parents) they are enjoying a resurgence.

Tomtits are one of my favorite forest birds, partly because of their role in the recovery of the Chatham Island robin, and partly because I think it's fun to say the name.

The green bellbird is a common resident of most of New Zealand's forest (they are found virtually everywhere but the far north). Bellbirds have a beautiful, clear song and birds from different areas have different dialects.

When heard, the tui, or parsons bird, is often confused with the bellbird. The tui, which has white throat feathers, mimics the calls of other birds, especially its neighbor the bellbird. But the tui often blows its cover when it adds a series of clucks at the end of a song – a bellbird wouldn't be caught dead doing that!

One of the most beautiful birds in the New Zealand forest is the rare saddleback. The North Island bird can be seen in some preserves and on offshore islands like Kapiti; the South Island can be seen on Ulva and Motuara Islands (as well as a few other offshore islands). The bright red band around their backs is distinctive, as is their chattery call.

You are much more likely to hear than see the gray warbler – its call is distinctive and, once heard, you will understand their name.

Marine Mammals

New Zealand is a hotspot for marine mammals. Of the 77 species of dolphins and whales worldwide, 35 have been recorded in New Zealand waters, including the world's largest, the sperm whale, and the smallest, the Hectors dolphin. Sealing was New Zealand's first industry and almost brought an end to these animals; the same is true of the early whaling industry. But now all are protected and add to the tourist draw of New Zealand. Areas where marine mammal watching is a popular activity include: the Bay of Islands, Bay of Plenty, Kaikoura, Banks Peninsula and the Otago Peninsula. Descriptions of animals and activities are included in those chapters.

WHALES

The largest whale in the world is the sperm whale; the male can reach 20 meters (65 feet) and the female up to 12 meters (39 feet). These whales are most likely seen in Kaikoura.

Long-finned pilot whales are common around New Zealand and have, unfortunately, been the subject of large-scale strandings – one notable stranding was just north of Gisborne, the other near Farewell Spit.

The humpback whale is slightly smaller than sperm whale and not nearly as common, but there are occasional sightings in the Tasman Sea, offshore of Fiordlands.

DOLPHINS

The orca or killer whale is actually the largest dolphin on earth. These fellows are pretty amazing to see, with a tall, straight dorsal fin. While a predator of other dolphins, rays, seals, birds and penguins, orca are not predatory towards humans (unless provoked). At different times of the year, orca can be seen in different spots around New Zealand.

Flipper, the dolphin we all watched on television, was a bottlenose dolphin. Bottlenose are common around both main islands of New

Zealand. They grow to about three or four meters (nine to 13 feet) and are usually found in groups.

Common dolphins get their name honestly – they are the most common dolphins in the world and are slightly smaller than the bottlenose. They are most often found offshore, but, like many other marine mammals, come to Kaikoura to feed. They usually swim in pods and, like the bottlenose, often swim on the bow-wake of boats

Most recognizable by their antics are the dusky dolphins. While all dolphins are natural gymnasts, the dusky dolphins take it to a new level. Smaller than the common and bottlenose, they top out at about two meters (6½ feet) and are the ones that people most often swim with in Kaikoura.

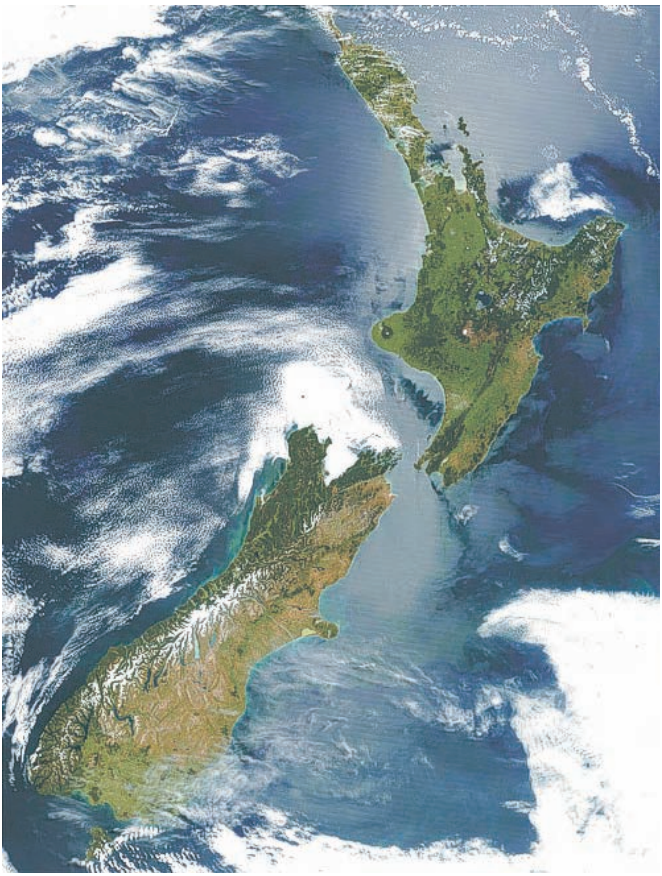
Hector's dolphins are the smallest in the world and also the rarest. They are only found in New Zealand and are most common in the South Island. Unlike the pointier dorsal fin of most dolphins, the Hectors have a rounded, short dorsal fin. They tend to swim either alone or in very small groups.

OTHER MARINE MAMMALS

New Zealand sea lions are only found on the South Island. They are a protected species and can be seen in Otago and the Catlins.

The New Zealand fur seal is common and protected throughout the country. While their numbers are nowhere near what they were before the sealers arrived in the 1800s, there are colonies of them on both islands and it's easy to find a spot to see them sunbathing on a rock. Fur seals have more prominent ears and bigger front flippers than sea lions, though sea lions have much bigger bodies.

Warning: *Do not get between a sea lion or seal and the water! They may look fat and slow, but they can yell very loudly and move a lot faster than you'd expect!*



New Zealand from space (NASA Earth Observatory)

Travel Information

At a Glance

- *For emergency assistance dial 111*
- *Telephone country code: 64*
- *Capital: Wellington*
- *Head of State: Queen Elizabeth II of England*
- *Governor General: Dame Silvia Cartwright*
- *Prime Minister: The Right Honourable Helen Clark, elected in 1999, re-elected in 2002 and 2005*
- *Leader of the Opposition: Dr. Don Brash*
- *Area: 268,000 square km (103,000 square miles), 1,770 km (1,097 miles) in length from top to bottom (as a comparison, California is 770 miles long). It is roughly the same size as Colorado, Japan or Britain and made up of two major islands, the North and South, and a number of small outlying islands. The North and South Islands are separated by the 20-km-wide (12-mile) Cook Strait.*
- *Location: In the South Pacific Ocean, approximately 1,900 km (1,200 miles) east of Australia and 10,000 km (6,210 miles) west of San Francisco. It lies between 34°S and 47°S.*
- *Time zone: 12 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time. New Zealand is the first country to see the sun each day.*
- *Population: The population is currently about 4,000,000. (A peak population of 4,800,000 is expected by 2046.)*
- *Coastline: 15,811 km (9,824 miles)*
- *Highest point: Mt. Cook, 3,754 meters (12,313 feet)*
- *Deepest lake: Lake Hauroko, 462 meters (1,515 feet)*

- *Largest lake: Lake Taupo, 606 km (234 miles)*
- *Largest glacier: Tasman Glacier, 29 km (18 miles) long*
- *Deepest cave: Nettlebed, Mount Arthur, 889 meters (2,916 feet)*
- *Currency: New Zealand Dollar. Depending on the economy, $1NZ hovers around $0.50 US or $0.70 Australia.*
- *Education: Compulsory until the age of 15*
- *Unemployment: 4.6%*
- *Electricity: 230 volts, 50 hertz. Many hotels and motels provide 110 volt, 20 watt and AC sockets for electric razors, but bring a voltage transformer if you plan to use a hairdryer or the like.*
- *Flight time from Los Angeles: about 11 hours*
- *Language: English and Te Reo Maori are the official languages. About one quarter of the Maori population living in New Zealand speak Te Reo Maori (around half of those under the age of 25) but virtually all speak English as well.*
- *Population origin: 75.8% European; 13.8% Maori; 5.3% Pacific Island; 4.5% Asian.*
- *Measurements: New Zealand is officially on the Metric System, although most people refer to their height in feet and inches, and will use expressions like "it's miles away."*

Tip: *The official Tourism New Zealand website is www.newzealand.com. There is a fantastic travel planner on the site.*

The Basics

◆ When to Go

When you visit depends very much on what you want to do once you're here. New Zealand enjoys four seasons, but only in the mountains will you find much snow or fierce winter conditions. Otherwise, winter is a rather mild affair, though accented by wind and rain – and, in some areas, it can be the bone-chilling wet stuff. If you want to ski, obviously, come in the winter; but if you are coming to enjoy the tramps, lakes and

other outdoor activities, you may find some of the tour operators closed over the winter months.

Remember: *New Zealand is an island nation and weather changes quickly and dramatically.*

Let's go back to the basics… New Zealand is in the Southern Hemisphere, so the seasons are reversed. I just add six months on to whatever month I'm thinking about and consider what the weather in Northern California/Oregon is like at that time. For example, April in New Zealand is very much like October in Northern California – typically settled weather with crisp mornings and nights and shortening days, and a real chance of a warm, Indian summer. My favorite months for traveling in New Zealand are February, March and April; February because it's usually the hottest and most likely to be the driest (although in 2004, February was the wettest in history and floods devastated much of the lower North Island); March and April because the weather is still settled, it's not particularly windy, most of the tourists are gone, and tour operators are still up and running. The busiest time for tourism is from Christmas to the end of February – January is prime time for kiwi families to travel and international tourists make up the bulk in February. But keep in mind, we are talking New Zealand busy, not Disney World, Paris or New York busy. Total international tourists visiting New Zealand number around two million annually.

◆ Health Concerns

New Zealand is a relatively healthy country, with no bizarre diseases that your family doctor won't have heard of. I recommend that you carry travel insurance that covers general health care and emergency treatment in addition to ticket and luggage coverage. New Zealand has an Accident Compensation Commission (ACC) that provides personal injury coverage for New Zealand citizens, residents and temporary visitors. In return for this coverage, people do not have the right to sue for injuries. As a visitor, though, it is still recommended that you have your own health and accident coverage.

Giardia, *an intestinal parasite, is present in some areas of New Zealand. Many of the rivers and streams are clear of giardia, but, to be safe, when you are tramping, camping or otherwise exploring*

the wilderness, get local knowledge or treat your water by boiling, filtering or using chemical treatments like iodine. All tap and drinking water in cities and towns is safe to drink.

◆ Dangers & Annoyances

New Zealand is a very safe destination, but it's important to use common sense. Petty theft (and worse) does occur and cars parked with valuables visible are prime targets. Watch your things and don't carry a lot of cash.

The telephone number for emergency assistance is 111.

◆ How Long Should I Stay?

When you're traveling to a long-haul destination, you want it to be worth your while. But it's often impractical to wait until you can take a month or more, which is ideal. So my advice is this. Come for as long as you can and don't try to split your holiday between New Zealand and Australia, unless you have months to spend. Pick a few areas to visit and get to know them well – the biggest mistake most people make is trying to fit too many places and things into a short time. Find some activities you want to do, or sights you want to see, and then design your trip around them. Give yourself some days off and don't be set on a strict schedule, because something will come up that you hadn't heard about before! Still, the temptation to fit as much in as possible is strong and many people stay for two or three weeks on their first trip to get an overview, and then plan a return trip to see the places they missed or to better experience the ones they loved.

Driving: *New Zealand is small. But driving is not like getting on the Autobahn or Interstate 80. Most of the roads, except for a few around major cities, are two lanes, often curvy and hilly and, especially on the South Island, linked by one-lane bridges. You won't get in the car and drive 70 miles an hour for days on end!*

◆ How Much Should I Pack?

As little as possible. New Zealanders have a very laid-back, casual lifestyle and as far as dress goes, basically anything is fine. You'll

want to pack appropriately for activities (i.e., warm clothes for tramping) and be sure to bring a waterproof jacket or raincoat. I usually use a three-season sleeping bag, because even in the summer, it can be chilly in the mountains. And I always take plenty of merino wool layers to keep me warm, regardless of season. In the cities, you may feel compelled to dress up a bit, but it's not imperative and Kiwis are very forgiving of anyone who might be underdressed. Let's face it, most of us own a pair of gumboots and you'll see plenty of locals walking around barefoot – it's still a Pacific island and that's the attitude.

We have some wonderful outdoor stores, so if you're in the market for new gear, you could plan a little extra in the budget and shop while you're here.

Tip: *If you'll be camping or tramping and staying in huts, make sure your gear is clean when you arrive at the airport. When you claim it, MAF (Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries) will inspect your things, and may even disinfect them.*

As far as personal stuff goes, you can buy things like shampoo and all manner of personal hygiene products if you run out, so no need to panic. And there's really no reason to bring your own coffee or teabags or the like – we really do eat here and have a fairly reasonable selection of foods.

Film: *If you're coming from North America and using a traditional camera, bring film. Buying at the large warehouse-type stores in the US is much cheaper than in New Zealand. The same goes for contact lens solution.*

◆ The Details

Visitors to New Zealand need to have a current passport that will be valid for at least three months beyond the time you intend to stay. You also need an onward or return ticket to a country that you have permission to enter and sufficient money to support yourself during your stay (approximately $1,000 per month per person).

Do I Need a Visa?

You do not need a visa to visit New Zealand if you are a New Zealand citizen or resident permit holder, an Australian resident with a current Australian resident return visa, or a citizen of a country that has a visa waiver agreement with New Zealand. These countries include most European, North American and South East Asian countries and Japan. Australian passport holders and permanent residents can stay in New Zealand indefinitely.

If you have questions about visas and regulations, the New Zealand Immigration Service has a very informative website, www.immigration.govt.nz, and has an embassy and consulate in many countries.

Foreign Consulates in New Zealand

(all in Wellington except as noted)

- *Australia, 72 Hobson Street, ☎ 04-473-6411*
- *Canada, 61 Molesworth Street, ☎ 04-473-9577*
- *France, 34 Manners Street, ☎ 04-384-2555*
- *Germany, 90 Hobson Street, ☎ 04-473-6063*
- *Japan, Level 12, ASB Bank Centre, 135 Albert Street, Auckland, ☎ 09-303-4106*
- *Netherlands, corner Featherston and Balance Streets, ☎ 04-473-8652*
- *UK, 44 Hill Street, Thorndon, ☎ 04-472-6049*
- *USA, 29 Fitzherbert Terrace, Thorndon, ☎ 04-472-2068*

Customs

In addition to personal effects, visitors to New Zealand are allowed the following duty-free allowances:

- *200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250 grams of tobacco.*
- *Six liters of wine or beer and one 1,125 ml bottle of spirits or liqueur.*

Excess quantities are liable for customs charges.

- *In addition, each traveler may import (duty free) other accompanied goods that have a total combined value of $700.*

New Zealand's isolated location has resulted in a unique environment that is relatively pest- and disease-free. Consequently, arriving passengers and their baggage are scrutinized rather closely. MAF

(Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries) will inquire as to your belongings and may inspect them. Most items are not disallowed, but must be claimed – if you are carrying any food, plant or animal products be sure to list these on your arrival card. Certain foodstuffs are not allowed, for instance, honey and other bee products. There are other prohibited items, such as products made from endangered animals. Certain animals are not allowed and others must go through a quarantine procedure; if you are considering bringing a living animal in to the country,be sure to contact MAF before your trip. If you have an item that you are not sure of, contact the New Zealand embassy in your home country, customs or MAF before beginning your journey, www.customs.govt.nz, www.maf.govt.nz.

Getting Here

◆ By Air

International airports are in Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington, Christchurch, Queenstown and Dunedin, but most of those are serviced only by flights to and from Australia.

From the United States, there are direct flights to Auckland from Los Angeles (Air New Zealand, Qantas, United) and San Francisco (Air New Zealand). Air Tahiti Nui has direct flights from New York to Auckland with a refueling stop in Papeete, Tahiti.

From Canada, Air Canada code-shares with United on flights from Vancouver to Auckland. Connections around Canada are available on Air Canada.

Freedom Air, Air New Zealand, United, Qantas and Virgin Blue all fly to and from Australia.

AIRLINE CONTACTS

- *www.united.com, ☎ 09-367-2324 or 0800-508-648*
- *www.airnewzealand.co.nz, ☎ 09-357-3000 or 0800-737-000*
- *www.qantas.co.nz, ☎ 0800-808-767*
- *www.freedomair.co.nz, ☎ 0800-302-302*
- *www.aircanada.ca, in the US, ☎ 1-888-247-2262*
- *www.originpacific.co.nz, ☎ 0800-302-302*

- *www.airtahitinui-usa.com, ☎ 1-877-824-4846*

Most airports have shuttle services that meet arriving flights and take you into town. Super Shuttle is a nationwide service with independent operators in most locations. You can contact them by calling ☎ 0800-748-885. Taxis are also available at most airports and meet incoming flights.

Tip: *When you leave New Zealand, you will need to pay a $25 departure tax. Check in with your carrier and they will tell you where to pay your tax – a stamp will be applied to your boarding pass.*

Getting Around

The first thing that I would buy is a decent map of New Zealand. There are lots of free ones that you can pick up, but they typically only have the major routes – and you'll be wanting to explore some of the more minor roads. My favorite maps are Kiwi Pathfinders.

◆ By Air

Air New Zealand has the lion's share of domestic travel and has services throughout both islands. Origin Pacific is quickly catching up, but has more limited service. Qantas flies to and from Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, Invercargill, Nelson, Palmerston North, Queenstown, Rotorua and Wellington.

Tip: *It's no more expensive to book two one-way flights within New Zealand than it is to book a round-trip or return flight – this makes for much more flexible travel arrangements.*

◆ By Train

Train service is limited in New Zealand. At the time of this writing (July 2006), it had just been announcecd that the one daily train between Auckland and Wellington would cease in September 2006; there is some discussion of how to keep it running, so if you are interested in train travel, I suggest you contact TranzScenic (details below). There

is one train daily (return service) between Picton and Christchurch. Train bookings can be made at any information center or directly through TranzScenic, www.tranzscenic.co.nz, ☎ 04-498-3302 or 0800-802-802. There are other scenic train trips (the TranzAlpine and the Taieri Gorge) and details for those are listed in the appropriate chapters. See pp. 321 and 340.

◆ By Bus

By far the largest bus service is InterCity Coachlines, which merged with Newman's Coach in 2002. They can be contacted at www.intercitycoach.co.nz ☎ 09-913-6100 and www.newmanscoach.co.nz, ☎ 09-913-6200. All information centers (see *Information Sources* in each chapter) can make bookings for bus service.

There are also other regional shuttle and bus companies – particularly on the South Island. Contact details have been included in appropriate chapters.

◆ By Car Rental

If you can afford to rent (hire) a car, I strongly suggest it. Seeing New Zealand involves getting off the beaten path and exploring small towns, beaches and settlements. I would also strongly suggest renting a car that is allowed on unsealed (unpaved) or "metal" (gravel) roads. If you are an off-the-beaten-path kind of traveler, it's too limiting if you can't go onto a dirt road. They are everywhere! If you have limited time and a few extra dollars you can fly from one destination to another and rent a car at each place. You can pick up a copy of *Guide to NZ Roads* from any Automobile Association office. The AA website, www.aahost.co.nz, has a good, brief discussion of some of the traffic rules.

To rent a car in New Zealand, you must have a current, valid driver's license and typically you must be 25 years old, but some agencies will rent to drivers between 21 and 25 at a slightly higher rate. Some of the smaller agencies may be more flexible in their policies about renting to drivers under 25. Some may rent to 18-year-olds. It pays to shop around.

CAR RENTAL COMPANIES

- *Avis, www.avis.com, ☎ 09-526-2847.*
- *Budget, www.budget.com, ☎ 09-976-2222.*
- *Hertz, www.hertz.com, ☎ 09-367-6350.*
- *Thrifty, www.thrifty.com, ☎ 09-309-0111.*
- *National, www.nationalcar.com, ☎ 09-275-0666.*

Local Agencies

- *Scotties, www.scotties.co.nz, ☎ 0800-736-825.*
- *A1, www.a1rentacar.co.nz, ☎ 03-349-8025.*
- *About New Zealand Rental Cars, www.rentalcar.co.nz, ☎ 0800-455-565.*

Recreational Vehicles

- *Maui, www.maui-rentals.com, ☎ 09-275-3013 or 0800-651-080.*
- *Britz, www.britz.com, ☎ 09-275-9090 or 0800-831-900.*
- *KEA Campers, www.keacampers.com, ☎ 09-441-7833.*

Funny word: *Unpaved roads are called "metal," although there is no metal involved; they are made of small split pebbles.*

Driving Tips

The first thing is the most obvious. If you are from North America, we drive on the *other* side of the road. It's not so bad once you get used to it, and the worst part is backing out of a driveway. But you'll be fine. The funniest parts are using the windshield wipers in place of the turn signals and letting your left hand work the gearshift. Thankfully, the feet stay the same. If you have a valid driver's license from your home country or an International Driving Permit, you can legally drive in New Zealand for up to one year.

Some of our roads, particularly in more rural areas and around the South Island, have one-lane bridges. When you approach a one-lane bridge, if there is a sign with a red arrow pointing in your direction of travel, and a larger black arrow in the direction of approaching traffic, you must give way.

Roundabouts are great and move traffic along quite efficiently but keep this in mind – it's ALWAYS give way to the traffic on your right! ALWAYS! ALWAYS! ALWAYS! Remember that and you'll be fine.

The Stupidest Rule of All

We all agree this is a dumb rule and it's on the agenda to consider changing it, but in the meantime, we are stuck with it. It relates to the "give way right" rule.

If you are at an intersection and want to turn left (the easy turn, not crossing any lanes of traffic), and along comes an on-coming vehicle wanting to turn right (the hard turn, across the lanes of traffic), the other guy, the one turning right, has the right of way!

In every other country this is not the case, the easy turn has the right of way. But in New Zealand, the hard turn has the right of way. Yield to the car on your right!

Typically, speed limits are 100 km (62 miles) per hour on main roads out of city or town centers, and 50 kph (30 mph) in urban areas. Speeding tickets are happily given out and there are extremely gruesome billboards to remind you that speeding, drunk driving and tired drivers end up dead.

You MUST wear a seat belt while driving or as a passenger. You, as the driver, are responsible for children wearing their seat belts; adults are responsible for themselves. You can be pulled over and ticketed (as a driver or passenger) for not wearing one. It is also the law to wear a helmet when riding a bicycle.

A word about drunk driving: New Zealand has really cracked down on driving under the influence of alcohol and there is zero tolerance. Just don't do it.

Communications

◆ Telephone

Most public telephones are of the phone-card type, and you will find very few coin-operated telephones in New Zealand. There are a number of cards available, including Telecom, KiaOra and Easycall. I have found

that KiaOra and Easycall have the cheapest rates overseas, but within New Zealand, they are all about the same. Telecom uses cards that slide into the telephone; with the others, you dial a toll-free number and enter a PIN number before dialing your destination.

A/H shown before or after a telephone number means "after hours." Typically, this is the home telephone number of the business owner or manager.

Mobile phones are big in New Zealand, just as they are everywhere else. You can either set up your international phone to work in New Zealand or you can rent a pre-pay phone at the major airports. Alternatively, for about $35, you can get a SIM card to put in your own phone and use that during your stay. Mobile phone numbers begin with 021, 025, 027 and 029. They are more expensive to dial than landlines, but the person receiving the call does not get charged.

Using the Telephone System

- *Toll-free numbers begin with 0800 and 0508 and are followed by six or seven digits; 0900 are toll numbers.*
- *Directory assistance: 018*
- *Emergency: 111*
- *International direct-dial access code: 00*
- *International directory assistance: 0170*

NEW ZEALAND AREA CODES

- *New Zealand country code: 64*
- *Auckland and Northland: 09*
- *Coromandel Peninsula, Bay of Plenty, Waikato and Central Plateau: 07*
- *East Coast, Hawke's Bay, Wanganui, Manawatu and Taranaki: 06*
- *Wellington: 04*
- *South Island: 03*

Most accommodations and tourism operators have fax machines, although as e-mail has become more popular, less and less business is done by fax. If you need to send a fax overseas, prices vary, but hover around $5; to receive, it's around $1.

Internet access is available just about everywhere.

Opening Hours

New Zealand is still small-town when it comes to business hours. Things are changing and there is a trend toward shops being open on Sundays in the major cities, but out in the sticks, shop hours are very conservative and everything tends to close mid-day on Saturday and remain so until Monday. (Supermarkets, dairies and petrol stations are the exception.) Generally, most shops open from 9 am to 5:30 pm, Monday to Friday, with either Thursday or Friday being late-night shopping – usually until 9 pm. In tourist areas, shops tend to stay open later every night. Businesses are typically open weekdays from 9 am to 5 pm, and government offices from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.

Dairies: *Convenience stores are called "dairies" in New Zealand.*

New Zealand Post

Most New Zealand Post shops are open Monday to Friday only, but it all depends on the post shop. In some towns where there is no separate post shop the post is handled by a stationery/book store. The cost to send a postcard internationally is $1.50.

Postal services in New Zealand were deregulated in 1998, but NZ Post still has 97% of the domestic market share.

Food

What was once the land of lamb and potatoes has developed into a culture of fresh, Pacific Rim-inspired fare. Similar in many ways to California cuisine, the modern Kiwi menu includes flavors of the Mediterranean and Asia.

In addition to lamb, we have high quality, grass-fed beef, wild and farmed pork, and venison. Poultry is also popular, as is seafood. Fish varieties on many menus and in shops include terakihi, blue cod, snapper tuna, John Dory, grouper and orange roughy. Special stars-from-the-sea are whitebait and shellfish, including green-lipped mus-

sels, Bluff oysters, paua (abalone) and crayfish (rock lobster). A huge range of fresh produce, including kiwifruit, many varieties of apples (my favorite is Braeburn), stone and berry fruit, kumara (sweet potato), capsicum (bell peppers) and asparagus, are grown and served. Dairy products reign supreme in New Zealand, with fabulous cheeses and a plenitude of ice cream.

You'll still find plenty of options for fish and chips, and meat pies are a popular fast-food item. The Sunday-evening roast is not a thing of the past and while larger towns and cities have fast-food chains, independent takeout places are very popular. You will see marmite and vegemite – brown spreads high in Vitamin B that are made out of brewer's yeast. It's definitely an acquired taste and Kiwi kids (like their Australian counterparts) grow up with the stuff.

Did you know? *Starters and entrées are what North Americans would call appetizers. Mains are what North Americans would call entrées or the main courses. Pudding is any type of sweet dessert. Jelly is what North Americans would call Jell-O or gelatin (making it easy to imagine why most New Zealanders think a peanut butter and jelly sandwich is disgusting).*

Pavlova is the national dessert. A meringue cake, it is usually topped with fruit – kiwi fruit or strawberries – chocolate, or nuts. Just about everyone has a favorite recipe or style – some like it crunchy and short, some like it really tall; you name it, the variation is there. And so is the Trans-Tasman controversy about who invented it – but one thing that is agreed on is that it was named after the Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova.

◆ Drinks

New Zealand has embraced the café culture and in all but the smallest of towns you'll find at least one café with an espresso machine (though some are driven better than others). We have the full menu of espresso drinks – latte, cappuccino, mocha – and also some different ones. A short black is espresso; a long black is a short black but weaker and larger; and a flat white is a long black with milk (and sometimes a bit of froth). An Americano is a long black served with a pot of hot water or diluted.

BYO *means "bring your own" and usually refers to wine only at a restaurant.*

There is plenty of beer to be drunk around the place and much of it produced by New Zealand Breweries and DB. Beer has as much of a local backing as sports teams – Speights is Pride of the South, for example. Microbreweries exist in pockets – like Nelson and the West Coast of the South Island.

New Zealand is in the New World as far as wine is concerned. There are wine-producing regions from the top of the North Island to the bottom of the South, including Auckland, Waiheke Island, Northland, Gisborne, Hawke's Bay, Martinborough, Marlborough, Nelson, Canterbury, Waipara and Central Otago.

Did you know? *Central Otago, famous for Pinot Noir, is the southernmost wine-growing region in the world.*

Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc put New Zealand on the wine map and, while the whites have garnered the most attention, Pinot Noir is the red (especially from Central Otago and Wairarapa) that may end up meaning more to New Zealand than Sauvignon Blanc. Other varieties grown include: Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, as well as many other varieties in smaller quantities. Given all the Chardonnay and Pinot Gris (and Pinot Meunier) it should not be a surprise that New Zealand also makes a lot of sparkling wine.

If you are at all interested in wine touring, I suggest you pick up a copy of Cuisine Wine Country. It's an annual put out by Cuisine magazine and lists all the wine-growing regions, the wineries in each and what they offer. It is available at most magazine and bookshops.

Traveling With Kids

Being one of the safest destinations in the world and a country that celebrates its own children and family, New Zealand is a good destination for kids, but many of the activities here are designed for people who are "big." Sea kayaking, quad-bike riding, and rafting, for instance, often have

a minimum age of 16 and many of the tramps would be very strenuous for young legs.

However, when I was guiding on the Queen Charlotte Track, some of my favorite trips were with families. The youngest chap I led (who walked the whole 71 km/43 miles) had just turned 12. He had to work hard and there were a few tears along the way, but he proudly made it from one end to the other. There are quite a few interactive museums (Te Papa in Wellington and Te Manawa in Palmerston North stand out), many farm stays (Landsdown Farm Park in Marlborough), more than a couple of places to get close to animals (Nga Manu Reserve on the Kapiti Coast, Mt. Bruce and Riverleigh Lodge in Wairarapa, and Walter Peak High Country Farm in Queenstown), and a few multi-day walks that are perfect for shorter legs (Queen Charlotte, Abel Tasman, Kaikoura Coast Track).

I think the ultimate for kids is either a canoe trip down the Whanganui River or a raft trip down the Clarence.

Of course, most of the sightseeing and watchable wildlife is appropriate for kids, and what youngster wouldn't need to stifle a giggle watching the penguins come in for the night? As long as your children are well-behaved, can be quiet when it's important (i.e., around wildlife) and have a sense of adventure, bring 'em along!

Holidays

January	New Year's Day
January 2	New Year's Holiday
February 6	Waitangi Day
March/April	Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday
April 25	ANZAC Day (honoring Australia New Zealand Army corps)
1st Monday June	Queen's Birthday observed
4th Monday October	Labour Day
November 5	Guy Fawkes' Night (not a public holiday, but a national celebration with lots of fireworks)
December 25	Christmas Day
December 26	Boxing Day

In addition to the national holidays, each province has its own anniversary day holiday. The actual date observed may vary from year to year.

Southland . . . . . January 17
Wellington . . . . . January 22
Auckland and Northland . . . . . January 29
Nelson and Buller . . . . . February 1
Otago . . . . . March 23
Taranaki . . . . . March 31
South Canterbury . . . . . September 25
Hawke's Bay . . . . . November 1
Marlborough . . . . . November 1
Chatham Islands . . . . . November 30
Westland . . . . . December 1
Canterbury . . . . . December 16

Daylight savings *begins on the 1st Sunday in October and finishes on the 3rd Sunday in March.*

◆ School Holidays

These vary from year to year, but this general guideline for the school year 2006 may help you in planning your trip. Consider that Kiwis are big holiday makers when the kids are out!

- *December 21-February 6*
- *April 14-25*
- *July 1-16*
- *September 23-October 8*

◆ Local Festivals & Celebrations

This list is not exhaustive, but includes the major festivals:

January

Auckland Anniversary Day Regatta – Auckland's biggest sailboat race. Held either on the fifth Monday in January or the first Monday in February.

The Gathering rave – Alcohol-free dance and music festival, Golden Bay. Over three days, ending January 1.

February

Marlborough Wine and Food Festival – second weekend.

Napier Art Deco Festival – third weekend.

International Festival of the Arts – Wellington; in even-numbered years only. Runs from the end of February to mid-March. In 2006, the dates are February 24-March 19.

Aotearoa Maori Performing Arts Festival – Wellington; in odd-numbered years only. Dates vary.

Taste Nelson Wind and Food Festival – first Saturday.

Garden City Festival – Christchurch; February 3-14.

Hawke's Bay Harvest food festival – Waitangi weekend.

March

Golden Shears competition – Masterton, usually the first week of March, but dates vary.

Wild Foods Festival – Hokitika, second Saturday.

Taranaki Festival of the Arts, New Plymouth, February-March, odd-numbered years only.

Warbirds over Wanaka International Air Show – Easter weekend even-numbered years.

Classic Fighters Marlborough – Easter weekend odd-numbered years.

April

Highland Games, Hastings. Date varies, often held at Easter.

Waiheke Jazz Festival – Waiheke Island, Easter week.

June

NZ Agricultural Field Days – Hamilton, third week of June.

July

Auckland International Film Festival. Runs for just over two weeks in mid-month.

October

Gumboot Festival – Taihape. Dates vary. The festival lasts for three days, at the end of October or beginning of November.

November

Guy Fawkes' Night fireworks – November 5.

Toast Martinborough food and wine festival – third Sunday.

December

Festival of Lights – New Plymouth. Mid-December to early February.

Money Matters

I am often asked if New Zealand is an expensive place to visit and, in all truth, it can be as expensive as you want it to be. Clearly, there are luxury resorts, pricey wine and fancy adventure trips around each corner, but you can also get away with not spending much at all.

Depending on where you want to stay, an average motel will run about $80-$100 a night for two people. A café-type dinner will be about $30 and a glass of wine starts at about $7. Depending on your appetite, breakfast and lunch can run about $10 a day and car rentals vary, but you can typically get a small car for less than $50 a day (sometimes, quite a bit less), and long-term rentals are cheaper.

◆ About Money

New Zealand currency is based on the New Zealand dollar. There are $5, $10, $20, $50 and $100 notes (all different colors, and size increases with value), $0.10, $0.20, and $0.50 silver coins, and $1 and $2 gold coins (coins also get larger with more value).

Banks are usually open from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday (some in the larger centers are open on Saturday mornings). All banks except the Kiwi Bank (owned by *New Zealand Post*) are foreign-owned.

You will need to use New Zealand money for transactions, and most businesses will not take foreign currency of any kind. Traveler's checks can be exchanged for cash at most banks and any *bureaux de change* (typically found in tourist areas and major airports), which tend to stay open later than banks, usually until 9 pm. Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) are generically referred to as Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale (EFTPOS). Most retailers (except very small ones) accept EFTPOS for purchase. However, I have found it difficult to use my US-based ATM cards at shops – though I have no problem getting cash from them at the bank ATM. MasterCard and VISA are widely accepted and there are increasing numbers of businesses that accept American Express and Diners Club. I would not, however, have American Express or Diners Club as my sole credit cards.

Exchange rates: NZ$1 = US$0.61; US$1 = NZ$1.53.

◆ Tipping

Tipping is not expected or customary in New Zealand – Kiwis never tip each other – but you won't insult anyone if you choose to do it. Don't feel obligated to tip big, but 5-10% is a nice reward for someone who has gone out of his way. Guides do not expect to be tipped but, as a former guide, it's always a nice surprise at the end of a trip.

◆ Taxes

Goods and Services Tax (GST) adds 12½% to the price of most things in New Zealand. Most prices are quoted with GST included, but beware of the odd quote that doesn't.

◆ Accommodation & Meal Costs

Accommodation prices throughout this book reflect the price of an average room for two people, in New Zealand dollars. Where a range is given, the property has more than one type of room available.

For restaurants, the code reflects the price of an average dinner in New Zealand dollars. Where a range is given, the restaurant has either more than one menu, or a broad range of choices.

Accommodations

There is a huge range of accommodations available in New Zealand. You can stay at top of the heap luxury lodges or in small town historic pubs and everything in between. While there is no way that I can list all the accommodations in each town or region, I hope I've provided a good cross-section.

Toilets: First, we call a spade a spade and a toilet a toilet. There is no "powder room" or "rest room." It is the toilet or the loo.

When flushing a New Zealand toilet, you usually have two options: the "full" flush and the "half" flush. Using the half-flush saves water and is intended to be used when you don't need a full flush – I'm sure you can figure out what time of the day you need which.

En-suite refers to a room that has an attached private toilet (and usually shower or bath).

Private refers to a room (usually in a B&B) that has its own toilet (and shower or bath) but that is down the hall, not connected to the room.

Shared refers to a room that shares the toilet with other guests (and sometimes the host).

Hotels come in all shapes and sizes but have in common one thing – a liquor license. There are some totally funky old pubs with great hotel rooms that have shared facilities and are as cheap as any backpacker room, and there are the multi-national luxury hotels like Hyatt and Hilton. Plus you'll find everything in between.

Motels have self-contained units with cooking facilities – some have full kitchens with ovens and some just have a jug for boiling water, a microwave and a toaster.

Motels in most towns take turns being the "Duty Motel." The duty motel is responsible for keeping a log of what motels have vacancies – if you find yourself in a town and the information center is closed and you stop at a couple of motels and can't find a vacancy, ask what motel is the duty motel and then call them. They should be able to help find you a room. Most towns also have a "Duty Bed and Breakfast."

Bed-and-Breakfast accommodations run the gamut. I have visited and stayed in everything from a spare bedroom in a house to a specially built, top-end facility. One word I get tired of, though, is "luxury" when it comes to B&Bs. There are some B&Bs that are truly luxurious; most of them, though, are very comfortable and pleasant. B&Bs may have en-suite bathrooms, shared or private facilities. Breakfast ranges from a continental spread of toast, cereals and fruit, to a full cooked farm-style meal. Don't be surprised when a host or hostess proudly presents peanut butter – they know not everyone likes marmite and vegemite and are trying to make you feel at home.

Tip: *When traveling with another person, it is usually just as cheap to book a twin or double room as it is to get two bunks in a dorm room.*

Homestay is often used interchangeably with bed and breakfast. At a homestay, though, expect to interact more with the family.

Lodges can be top-end or moderate. They almost always include breakfast and often include dinner. In a lodge, you would not expect to share facilities or living space with the family, owner or manager.

Farmstays are just that – accommodation at a farm. The farm can be any size and of any type. You will usually be invited to partake in farming activities, but don't feel pressured to do more than you want. This is a great way to get to know some local folks and guests are usually treated like family. All sorts of accommodations are available.

"Backpackers" are typically independently owned and operated hostels. Wipe all thoughts of youth hostels from yesteryear out of your mind – backpackers are fabulous places to stay and some are quite posh. Accommodation ranges from dorm rooms (sleeping more than four and sometimes up to over a dozen) to single, twin and double rooms. Some rooms have en-suite bathrooms and all backpacker accommodations have fully equipped communal kitchens and lounge areas. These are great places to meet other travelers, and you don't have to be 18 years old or younger to enjoy them. I often book a single, a double or a twin room at a backpackers so that I can interact with other traveling people – it's much more interesting than sitting by myself in a motel room. Most of the time, you need to provide your own bedding (sleeping bag) and towels, but sometimes linen is available at a nominal or no cost and more backpackers are moving towards supplying bedding.

Hostels associated with the New Zealand YHA (Youth Hostel Association) are dotted around the country and you can pick up a YHA guidebook at most of the information centers. YHA hostels typically offer the same range of accommodation options as other backpacker hostels.

Pick up a copy of the blue BBH guide, published by Budget Backpacker Hostels. *It lists most of the backpacker accommodations around New Zealand and rates them with a BPP – Backpacker Perception Percentage. The BPP is determined by guests staying at each BBH on a particular day (or days). Guests are asked to fill out a survey about the accommodation and a score is given. I have found this to be the most dependable method of picking a backpacker. See www.bbh.co.nz.*

Holiday Parks are scattered around New Zealand and come under a few banners, including "motor camps" and "holiday parks." In addition to tent and (usually) power sites, they have a variety of accommodation including: on-site motor homes or campers (on a power site often with cooking facilities; sleep two to four); standard cabins (basic sleeping accommodation for two to six, shared facilities and shared kitchen – with or without cooking utensils and supplies and usually not including bedding); kitchen cabins (sleeping facilities and equipped kitchen); en-suite unit (a standard cabin but with its own toilet and shower); and self-contained unit (with TV, equipped kitchen, en-suite bathroom). Some holiday parks or motor camps also have motel units and backpackers lodges.

Tip: *If you book into a holiday park and intend to self-cater (cook) in the communal kitchen, be sure to ask if the kitchen is equipped with dishes, cutlery and cooking utensils.*

Camping is basically allowed anywhere that it's not prohibited. That may sound like a weak description, but as long as you don't put your tent in an area that's marked "No Camping," you'll probably be OK. Avoid reserves and don't camp close to walking tracks. Additionally, on some tracks (such as the Milford Track) camping is strictly prohibited. Ask DoC or the local information center if you are unsure.

What's a bach? *Pronounced "batch," it's short for bachelor accommodation and is a Kiwi vacation cottage, often at the beach. Think about renting a bach for part of your stay… www.ki-wi.co.nz lists quite a few. Most information centers in 'beachy' areas have a listing of what's locally available, as well.*

◆ Accommodation Ratings

Tourism New Zealand and the New Zealand Automobile Association partnered together to create Qualmark New Zealand – the official quality agency for New Zealand tourism. Qualmark-rated operators typically display their rating at the entrance to their business. Its goal is to provide a way of knowing (with confidence) what you're getting. Check with www.qualmark.co.nz if you want to find out more.

QUALMARK RATINGS

☆ Acceptable – Meets customers' minimum requirements. Basic, clean and comfortable accommodation.

☆☆ Good – Exceeds customers' minimum requirements with some additional facilities and services.

☆☆☆ Very Good – provides a range of facilities and services and achieves good to very good quality standards.

☆☆☆☆ Excellent – Consistently achieves high quality levels with a wide range of facilities and services.

☆☆☆☆☆ Exceptional – The best available in New Zealand.

Adventures

Just about anything you can imagine doing in the outdoors is within easy reach in New Zealand. The mountains, lakes, rivers, sea, beaches, caves and sky are all accessible and open for exploration. This action-packed environment makes New Zealand a perfect adventure destination, but keep in mind, adventure activities – adrenaline sports, if you will – do carry a certain level of danger and risk. There aren't any red velvet ropes along the tracks and rivers. Chances are you won't get hurt, but the possibility is out there.

A Word about the Rivers

Rivers are one of the leading killers in New Zealand – their levels rise quickly and unexpectedly and more than a few lives have been lost, either by being swept away or being wrapped around a tree, or by some other gruesome accident. Be careful and don't try to cross a swollen river if you have any doubt about your ability.

Did you know? *"True right" refers to the right-hand side of a river when you are looking downstream.*

Specifics on activities are given later on a region-by-region basis. But here is an overview of some of the more popular activities.

◆ Tramping

It's what you might also call backpacking, hiking, or bush walking. Tramping is a hugely popular activity in New Zealand – and the best way to discover the country. I don't think a visit to New Zealand is complete unless you spend at least one (preferably three or more) days walking. There are thousands of kilometers of tracks around the country, most of them managed by the Department of Conservation (DoC), and many of them serviced by a system of backcountry huts. Huts range from the most simple (four walls, a ceiling and a couple of bunks) to very fancy (gas cookers, heaters, flush toilets). Prices for staying in the huts vary depending on level of accommodation and services offered. In addition to the public tracks managed by DoC, there are a few very nice private tramping tracks managed by landowners. I have included some of the more popular tracks below, as well as some of those less publicized. I honestly can't pick a favorite tramp – there are too many that I love.

Trail Classification

Path – A well-formed track that is suitable for a family and may be wheelchair accessible. Paths are always benched and waterways are bridged.

Walking track –Well-defined and suitable for individuals of average fitness levels. Some walking tracks are benched and you'll be more comfortable in shoes that offer support, but you probably won't require full-on hiking boots. Waterways are usually bridged.

Tramping track – Less well-defined and often with steep gradients or climbs; the footing may be uneven and you should have appropriate tramping gear, including hiking boots. Tramping tracks are not benched and some waterways are unbridged.

Route – A lightly marked trail but with little or no formed track. Routes require skill, experience and proper equipment and many waterways are unbridged.

DoC has designated eight of its walks and one of its river trips as Great Walks; these are described in the appropriate area section of

this book. The Great Walks require a Great Walks Pass; some of them (for example, the Milford and the Routeburn) have limited passes available and fill up months in advance. There are other walks around New Zealand that are, in my opinion, just as "great," so don't feel that if you miss out on these, you won't experience the best the country has to offer. For booking information, contact greatwalksbooking@doc.govt.nz, ☎ 03-249-8514, fax 03-249-8515.

❖ NEW ZEALAND'S GREAT WALKS

On the North Island

- Lake Waikaremoana, three to four days, Te Urewera National Park.
- Tongariro Northern Circuit, three to four days, Tongariro National Park.
- Whanganui River Journey, three- to five-day canoe trip, Whanganui National Park.

On the South Island

- Heaphy Track, four to five days, Kahurangi National Park.
- Abel Tasman Coastal Track, two to three days, Abel Tasman National Park.
- Kepler Track, four to five days, Fiordland National Park.
- Milford Track, four days, Fiordland National Park.
- Routeburn Track, three days, Mt. Aspiring and Fiordland National Parks.

On Stewart Island

- Rakiura Track, three days, Rakiura National Park.

There are nearly 1,000 backcountry huts scattered around New Zealand, making a trip to the backcountry a relatively civilized affair.

Tip: *Bunks are on a first-come, first-served basis and, unless you are booked into a hut that has a reservation system through DoC, there is no guarantee*

a bunk will be available. Consequently, many trampers carry tents as a back-up.

BACKCOUNTRY HUT CATEGORIES

Category 4 – Simple, basic shelter. Free of charge.

Category 3 – Simple, weatherproof huts with bunks or platforms, long-drop toilets, water supply. May or may not have mattresses; often a wood-burning stove or gas fire for heat. $5 per person per night.

Category 2 – Bunks with mattresses, water indoors at a sink, usually a wood burning stove or gas fire for heat and occasionally flush toilets. Sometimes have gas-fire cooking rings, but that is rare. $10 per person per night.

Category 1 – Top of the line. Most have separate bunkrooms, gas rings for cooking and gas fires for heat. Some have solar power for lighting and hot water, and some have flush toilets. $14 per person per night.

Huts on Great Walks may be more expensive (Milford and Routeburn $35 per person per night; Kepler $20 per person per night). During the winter, these huts are often stripped and revert to Class 2 or 3 status.

Many huts on the more heavily traveled tracks have "hut wardens" in residence. Wardens are volunteers for DoC and are gold mines of information. They are responsible for ensuring trampers pay their fees and often perform routine chores around the huts.

Did you know? *A "long drop" is an outhouse or latrine.*

All around New Zealand there are companies that lead guided walks. If you have a hankering to get out in the bush but aren't so keen to do it on your own, sign up for a guided walk. Not only do the guides know the ins and outs of the route, but they usually have a wealth of knowledge about New Zealand. I think it's a good idea when visiting a foreign country to take at least one guided trip – it gives you some insight and can serve as a great base for the rest of your travels.

My top choice for tramping guides is Southern Wilderness NZ, www.southernwilderness.com, in Picton.

◆ Rafting

With so many rivers around the country, it's no wonder New Zealand is a rafter's paradise. While the thrill for some is the rapids, for others, it's being treated to a day on the river in the middle of pristine, sky-scraping gorges. You can find a rafting trip in just about any corner of the country, but the most popular tourist destinations are Rotorua on the North Island and Queenstown on the South. If you're looking for a rafting experience that removes you from the main tourist centers, consider heli-rafting on the West Coast of the South Island or a multi-day rafting trip. Typically, you'll be outfitted in a wetsuit, helmet and personal flotation device and then you'll be instructed in paddling and safety techniques. A group of about six will be in each raft (along with a guide) and by the end of the trip, you will have formed into one cohesive team. It's a blast and a thrill and even if you end up on crutches, you won't regret it. But don't think you have to be a thrill-seeker to enjoy it – consider, for instance a family raft trip down the Clarence.

My choice for guided rafting trips with a difference is Hidden Valleys, www.hiddenvalleys.co.nz, Peel Forest.

Rivers and rapids are graded on a six-level system – the highest grade being assigned to the most demanding rapid. When you're booking a trip, consider if the river is a "continuous grade IV" or just has one grade IV rapid; perhaps the best runs have a few grade II and III for a warm up, a long string of grade IV and one or two grade V thrown in for thrills. Ask the operator, if you are unsure, and be forewarned, it all changes with river flow and rain.

RIVER GRADES

Grade I – Flat, moving water. A few small bumps of waves, no obstructions. Grins and some giggles.

Grade II – Some choppy waves, with few or no obstructions. Lots of giggles.

Grade III – Bigger waves, up to one meter or four feet, and some obstacles to maneuver around. Giggles and some big laughs.

Grade IV – Difficult, bigger waves with rocks midstream. This is a more challenging run and there's a good chance that you'll go for a swim. Scouting necessary. Much laughing, a few gasps, and a few whispered expletives.

Grade V – Large, unavoidable waves with long and violent rapids; holes are present, as are multiple obstacles. Some standing waves and narrow channels, increased risk of injury. Scouting is imperative. Many gasps, some loud expletives.

Grade VI – Commercially un-raftable, involves serious risk of life. No laughing matter.

◆ Kayaking & Canoeing

New Zealand is the best place I've found to kayak. I'm a sea kayaker and have never run out of places to paddle. If you are not experienced, go on a guided trip; if you are experienced, my advice is to hire a kayak and gear and head out for a few days. The Marlborough Sounds are my top choice for kayaking are in Fiordlands, Milford and Doubtful Sounds.

◆ Jet-Boating

It was a Canterbury farmer, William Hamilton, who developed the jet-boat. Based on water-jet propulsion, Hamilton figured out a way to get low draft boats up the very shallow braided rivers of the South Island. Now, just about every river in New Zealand has a jet-boat running on it. Rides are thrilling, there's no doubt about it, and most involve at least one 360° spin. You'll have to hold on and there's little doubt that you'll get wet – most operators supply you with a raincoat. My choice for jet-boat is the tried and true Shotover Jet through the Shotover Canyon in Queenstown. I think this is the most fun ride, by far. Www.shotoverjet.co.nz.

◆ Sailing

Having sailed to New Zealand from North America, I'm embarrassed to admit that I haven't done a heck of a lot of sailing since I've been here. There are boats for charter all around and I think the one place that I would be inclined to sail is the Bay of Islands. If you happen to be in Wellington on a race day, pop into one of the yacht clubs and see if you can crew. Likewise in Picton – sailors are always happy to have along a keen and interested newcomer. You can go on scenic sails in the Abel Tasman, the Bay of Islands and around Auckland.

◆ Skydiving

Skydiving is absolutely the scariest thing I have ever done, but others seem to love it and do it more than once. Top choices in New Zealand are Taupo, Nelson and Queenstown. I suppose my top choice here is Taupo Tandem Skydiving, but it's the only jump I've ever done (or will ever do) so I'm not able to make a fair comparison (www.skydive.net.nz).

◆ Scenic Flights

High on the must-do list of any visitor to New Zealand really should be a scenic flight. Save your money, eat nothing but three-minute noodles, whatever it takes, but go on a scenic flight. There is no better way to appreciate this country than to see it from above. I have three choices here – a Tiger Moth ride with the Central Hawke's Bay Aero Club (it's not really a commercial venture, but if you're nice, they may take you), a floatplane ride from Te Anau (see page 425), and my top choice of all airborne activities is Wanaka Helicopters. Absolutely the best scenic flight of my life (www.heliflights.co.nz).

◆ Horse Trekking

There are some fabulous horse treks around New Zealand. Some are just an hour's ride on the beach, but to get into the heartland you need to go for a couple of days. There are outfitters on both islands, and I've tried to include as many as possible. On the North Island, my choice is Makoura Lodge in Manawatu, www.makouralodge.co.nz, and on the South Island there is none better than Western Ranges Horse Treks, www.thehorsetrek.co.nz.

◆ Mountain Biking

There are some fabulous places to ride a bike and bikes can be rented in just about every tourist location. There are many plantation forests that have biking tracks – the Bottle Lake Forest in Christchurch and the Naseby Forest in Central Otago stand out as don't-miss spots. In addition to the forest tracks, there are plenty of miles of riding to be done – Skippers Canyon ranks up there. The Queen Charlotte is 71 km (44

miles) of single track, and the section from Mistletoe Bay to Anakiwa is mountain biking at its best. But there are hundreds of other rides and if you're a biker, pick up a copy of the Kennett Brothers *Classic New Zealand Mountain Bike Rides*. It's the bible.

◆ Bungy Jumping

You will not catch me on a bungy jump, but if you are so inclined, then certainly the most scenic option is the original AJ Hackett jump at the Kawarau Bridge outside of Queenstown. There are lots of competitors around NZ, but this really is the most amazing setting (Taupo Bungy isn't far behind).

North Island
Auckland

Introduction

Auckland is the largest city in New Zealand and the main port of entry for international visitors. Its 60 square kilometers (23 square miles) are home to 1¼ million people – one-third of New Zealand's population.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Getting Here 54
- Information Sources 55
- Auckland Central City 56
- North of Auckland 65
- Hauraki Gulf Islands 68

Known as The City of Sails, it is built on a narrow isthmus that separates two harbors – the Manukau and Waitemata – and claims to have more boats per capita than any other city in the world.

Auckland has the largest Polynesian population of any city in the world. In addition to nearly 20% of the population being of Maori descent, many islanders from the Cooks, Tonga, Niue, and Samoa immigrated here during the 1960s and 1970s, and there is a very strong Asian community. Unlike the rest of New Zealand, walking around Auckland you are sure to hear more than one accent and language; the diversity of the population gives a much more global feel to the city than is present in the more white-bread cities of the rest of the country.

Tamaki, the Maori name for the area, means battle and is probably a good description of what happened around the place. The fertile, low-slung land was no doubt a draw for early settlers, who fiercely battled from their *pas* (fortified villages). Forty-eight extinct volcanoes – like Mount Eden and One Tree Hill – ring Auckland, and these were natural settlements for the Maori. A walk or cycle up either is a good way to get your bearings and see the *pa*.

When the Europeans arrived, the Maori were still engaged in inter-tribal warfare and presented no organized resistance to the intruders.

Auckland
Te Arai Point
South Pacific
Topuni
Te Arai
Wairoa River
Arapaoa River
Tinopai
Te Hana
Pakiri
Leigh
Kellys Bay
Oruawharo River
Port Albert
Whangaripo
Whangateau Harbour
Pouto
Okahukura Peninsula
Tapora
Omaha
Tauhoa
FERRY
Kawau Island
Kaipara Entrance
Kaipara Harbour
South Head
Puhoi
Mahurangi
Waiwera River
Hauraki Gulf
Araparera
Shelly Beach
Waiwera
Orewa
Tiri Tiri Matangi
Tohekeroa River
Whangaparaoa
Parkhurst
Tasman Sea
Helensville
Dairy Flat
FERRY TO PORT FITZROY
FERRY TO TRYPHENA
Te Pua
Albany
Kumeu
Muriwai Beach
Devonport
Waitemata Harbour
Tamaki Strait
Ponsonby
Te Henga
Piha
Whitford
Manukau Harbour
Whatipu
Papakura
Pahurehure Inlet
Te Toro
Waiuku River
Waiuku
Waikato R
Port Waikato
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
9.25 MILES
15 KM
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1. Pouto Forest & Conservation Area
2. Lake Ototowa Scenic Reserve
3. Rangitira Beach
4. Woodhill Forest
5. Muriwal Beach Gannett Colony
6. Bethell's Beach
7. Piha Beach
8. Karekare Beach & Waterfall
9. Whatipu Beach
10. Auckland Centennial Memorial Park
11. Karioitahi Beach
12. Waiuku Forest
13. Glenmorgan Farm
14. Auckland Regional Botanic Gardens
15. Whitford Forest
16. Auckland International Airport
17. One Tree Hill
18. Mission Bay Beach & Marina
19. Waiheke Island
20. Rangitoto & Motutapu Islands
21. Takapuna Beach
22. Kumeu River Winery
23. Riverhead Forest
24. Long Bay Regional Park
25. Shakespeare Regional Park
26. Wenderholm Regional Park
27. Atuatui Forest
28. Dome Forest
29. Omaha Forest
30. Mangawhai Forest

By the 1840s, the British had acquired most of the land of the Ngati Whatua tribe and settlement began in earnest. Captain William Hobson was New Zealand's first governor and chose Auckland to be the capital, a title it lost to Wellington in 1865. While Wellington is the political heart, Auckland is the center of commerce and business and is (whether the rest of the country wants to admit it or not) the most powerful city.

Some of the popular tourist attractions in the city include the Auckland Museum, the Maritime Museum, Kelly Tarlton's Underwater World Aquarium, the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, the Museum of Transport and Technology, and the Sky Tower. The islands of the Hauraki Gulf would be the perfect place to spend some time at the beginning or end of your travels.

Getting Here

◆ By Air

The Auckland International Airport (about 20 km/12 miles south of the city) serves 45 airlines and is the main entry point for most visitors. You can get a shuttle ride from both the international and domestic terminals, and a ride to the city center (on a shuttle) will be about $30. Taxis are also available. In addition to the usual duty-free shops that are open for inbound flights, there is a baggage storage service and a bicycle dismantling and assembly area. In both the domestic and international terminals, there is a very helpful Visitor Information Centre, ☎ 09-275-6467.

Hint: *When you are departing Auckland on an international flight, there are more shops and restaurants once you pass through immigration and head to the boarding gates.*

◆ By Car

SH1 slices right through the city. Heading to the north, SH16 shoots off to the west coast. Average driving times to Auckland include: just under two hours from Hamilton, 6½ from Napier, 3½ from Rotorua, four from both Mt. Ruapehu and Taupo, just over three from Tauranga and

Waitomo and five from Whakatane. From farther afield, about 12 from Wellington.

Rideline provides a booking service for bus, train and ferry services around Auckland. www.rideline.co.nz, ☎ 09-366-6400.

◆ By Bus

Bookings can be made at the information centers or by contacting bus companies directly. As usual, I would recommend using the information center – they can explain all your options and explain the rules and regulations. InterCity, www.intercitycoach.co.nz, ☎ 09-913-6100, and Newman's, www.newmanscoach.co.nz, ☎ 09-913-6200, both depart from Sky City (see page 27) and provide bus transport all around the North Island. Guthreys Express transports passengers from Auckland to Rotorua, Taupo, Waitomo, Hamilton, and the Bay of Plenty, www.guthreys.nzhere.com, ☎ 09-309-0905. If you're heading to Northland, you'll want the Northliner Express, www.northliner.co.nz, ☎ 09-307-5873.

◆ By Boat

Cruise ships call in to Auckland every summer. You'll see the massive floating cities tied up by the Viaduct Harbour.

Ferry service connecting Auckland to Devonport on the North Shore and islands of the Hauraki Gulf is provided by ferry giant Fullers, www.fullers.co.nz, ☎ 09-367-9111.

For both vehicle and passenger service to Waiheke and Great Barrier Islands, contact Subritzky, www.subritzky.co.nz, ☎ 09-373-4036.

Information Sources

Tourism Auckland maintains www.aucklandnz.com. For central reservations and bookings, reservations@aucklandnz.com or call ☎ 09-979-2333

To get an idea of what's happening during your stay, take a look at www.eventsauckland.com.

The Visitor Information Centre is located at the corner of Quay and Hobson Streets, at the Viaduct Harbour and at 287 Queen Street.

Auckland Central City

Queen Street is the commercial center of Auckland and runs from the waterfront uphill to Karangahape Road (K Road). One block east of Queen Street is High Street, where you can shop in designer stores and grab a few good cups of coffee. There are restaurants worth a look and more than one place to sip a nice glass of wine. Vulcan Lane, a cut-through between the two main streets, is lined with bars and cafés, and on a nice day you're sure to see all the suits out having an after-work drink. Wandering around Auckland, you'll

Auckland, City of Sails

notice the Sky Tower, as it pierces any clouds that might be hanging around (see *Sightseeing*, page 60, for details). The Viaduct Harbour was the hub of activity for the America's Cup and is full of cafés, bars and clubs, as well as the New Zealand National Maritime Museum. East of the central city is Parnell, once a run-down suburb, now one of the trendiest neighborhoods. There are quite a few boutique shops and cafés, and the churches and restored villas built with kauri wood make for sightseeing. A bit farther is Newmarket, where clothing designers have their shops and where you won't go hungry or thirsty. West of the city center is Ponsonby, with nice restaurants, shops and bars; on the way is Victoria Market, a good place for those who like to shop at stalls and wander around looking at clothes and crafts.

◆ Getting Around

Auckland is a bit spread out, though the central city attractions are mostly within walking distance. If you're staying in the outer reaches or planning to explore some of the regional parks, your best bet is to rent a car.

Local buses are operated by Stagecoach Auckland and information can be gathered through Rideline, www.rideline.co.nz, ☎ 09-366-6400, at the information center or from your accommodation. There are bus stops scattered around the city. Buses marked Downtown end up on lower Queen Street, while those marked Midtown go to Victoria Park.

The Link loops around the city, taking in Parnell, Newmarket, K Road and Ponsonby. Link buses are white. They run from 6 am to 10 pm Monday to Thursday, 6 am to 11:30 pm on Friday, and 7 am to 11 pm on Saturday and Sunday.

For visitors, the Explorer Bus is a good option to access the popular spots. It's a hop-on/hop-off bus going to "Auckland's big 14 attractions." Buses leave every 30 minutes from 9 am to 4 pm. For a $30 day pass, you can ride as much as you like. It all begins at the Ferry Building at the end of Queen Street, heads out to Mission Bay, Kelly Tarlton's, the Domain, Parnell, Sky Tower and Victoria Market. There is a satellite run that leaves the Museum and goes out to Mt. Eden, St. Lukes (shopping center), MOTAT. www.explorerbus.co.nz, ☎ 0800-439-756.

◆ Adventures

Watchable Wildlife

Kelly Tarlton's Underwater World and Antarctic Encounter is just outside of the city center. Its walk-through acrylic tunnels were the first of their kind – you stand on a moving sidewalk and move through the tunnels as the fish swim around you, recreating a diver's experience. The Antarctic Encounter includes a replica of Scott Base, a penguin colony and a below-the-ice aquarium. The penguins are housed in a -7°C/19°F colony – like a giant freezer – and you visit by riding a heated snow-cat. Open 9 am daily. www.kellytarltons.co.nz, Tamaki Drive, ☎ 0800-805-050.

On Water

BEACHES

Closest to town is Mission Bay, which has a long golden sand beach, a running/roller blading pathway and lots of cafés – quite the trendy and attractive place to hang out. It's only 10 minutes from downtown.

New Zealand Surf Tours runs single and multi-day surf trips and lessons. www.newzealandsurftours.com, ☎ 09-832-9622.

ON BOATS

In addition to ferry service around the gulf, Fuller's has a 1½-hour scenic cruise, which is a great way to take in the sights and get out on the water for not much money.

Departs daily at 10:30 am and 1:30 pm. $30.40 adults, $15.40 children. www.fullers.co.nz, ☎ 09-367-9111.

A lot changed for Auckland when New Zealand won the America's Cup. The Viaduct Harbour was transformed into one of the trendiest spots in the city and high on the list of most tourists. You can take a peek at mega-yachts, sit outside sipping latte, have a bottle of wine and visit the New Zealand National Maritime Museum. The museum is filled with all things water-related. Start your visit with the 10-minute film *Te Waka: Our Great Journey,* a story of Pacific migration told in an entertaining and visually striking way. Then continue through the museum's exhibits, wander around the boats and take a ride out to the harbor.

The Pride of Auckland, based at the NZ National Maritime Museum, operates a fleet of sailboats and offers a huge range of sailing options. Prices begin with the 45- to 50-minute Sailing Experience: $52 adults, $28 children. www.prideofauckland.com, ☎ 09-373-4557, fax 09-377-0459.

With SailNZ, you can opt for either a day-sail on a catamaran or a match race on former America's Cup boats *NZL 40* or *NZL 41*. Better still, choose the Whitbread boat option (the boat was previously raced in the Whitbread around-the-world sailing race) and go 120 nautical miles offshore to the Bay of Islands and spend two nights out. www.sailnewzealand.co.nz, ☎ 09-359-5987 or 0800-724-569.

If you'd prefer a more traditional sailing experience, go with Tallship *Soren Larsen*, a square-rigger. www.sorenlarsen.co.nz, ☎ 09-411-8755 or 0800-767-365.

On Foot

One of the best things about Auckland is its series of Regional Parks. Pick up a copy of the regional parks brochure from the information center. There are over 20 parks scattered around, many of them are farm parks, many are coastal and many offer fabulous views of the harbors. Walks vary in length from a few minutes to a couple of hours.

In the Air

Scenic helicopter flights around the area are available from Helilink. Prices begin at $95. www.helilink.co.nz, ☎ 09-377-4406.

◆ Sightseeing

The Auckland Domain is a don't-miss spot. It is the oldest park in the city, and is wonderfully diverse. It is built around the cone of an extinct volcano and the land contours form a natural amphitheater. In addition to the Auckland Museum, set on three floors: the ground level is devoted to the people of New Zealand and contains one of the best Maori and Pacific collections in the world; the first level explains how New Zealand came to be and its natural history; and the second level concerns New Zealand at War. There is a Maori Cultural Performance three times daily; $15 adults, $7.50 children. Open daily, 10 am to 5 pm. Entry by donation, $5 suggested for adults, children free. www.akmuseum.org.nz. Also on the grounds is the Winter Garden, a fabulous collection of temperate-zone and tropical plants.

The Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki has a great collection of contemporary and traditional New Zealand as well as international art. It's conveniently downtown and has free tours daily at 2 pm. Open daily, 10 am to 5 pm. Corner of Wellesley and Kichener Streets, ☎ 09-379-1349.

People-watching: *The Aotea Square Markets take place every Friday and Saturday. You can buy gifts, food, clothing, listen to music or just wander around and watch.*

Auckland skyline

Sky City features a 328-meter (1,066-foot) needle that sticks up into the Auckland sky. If you are in the city on a clear day, go up to the top for a look around – it's spectacular. If you're so inclined, you can pop into the Casino. Or, if you're looking for something a bit more adrenaline-pumping, you can do the Sky

Jump, New Zealand's highest bungy. Or climb to the top of the tower with Vertigo Climb. A ride to the Sky Tower is $15 adults, $10 for YHA members and $7.50 children. At the corner of Federal and Victoria Streets, ☎ 09-363-6000.

The Auckland Bridge Climb is a 2½-hour trip, through, up and over the Auckland harbor bridge. Open daily for anyone seven years and older. www.aucklandbridgeclimb.co.nz, ☎ 09-979-2333 or 0800-000-808.

The Museum of Transport and Technology (MOTAT) is for those who like things that go. Open daily from 10 am to 5 pm. www.motat.org.nz, 805 Great North Road, Western Springs, ☎ 09-846-0199.

New Zealander Richard Pearce actually took the world's first flight, two years before the Wright Brothers. On March 31, 1902, Pearce flew his aircraft 91 meters (296 feet) in a field in Timaru. You can see a replica at MOTAT and at the site of his flights.

Mt. Eden, Maungawhau, is a dormant volcano; from the top you can get great views of the city and harbor. There are some nice walking tracks, it's a pleasant spot for a picnic and not far from downtown.

One Tree Hill, Maungakiekie, is a bit farther out from the city center, but has some really good walking and biking tracks. On a clear day, the views from the top are great. One Tree Hill Park and Cornwall Park come together to form the largest park in Auckland.

◆ Where to Stay

Books have been written on where to stay in Auckland. There is no way I can include an exhaustive list, but here's a start. Keep in mind that the closer to the city center, the higher the price, and if you're not fussed about being in the center, stay out a ways or try to swing a deal through an agent.

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Per room, double occupancy	
$	under NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$101-$175
$$$$	over NZ$175

In the City

Rydges is in the city center and close to most of the downtown action. www.rydges.com, corner of Federal and Kingston Streets, ☎ 09-375-5900, fax 09-375-5901 ($$$$).

The best big hotel is the Hilton Auckland, located right on Princes Wharf. All the rooms have balconies over the harbor. info_Auckland@hilton.com, 147 Quay Street, ☎ 09-978-2000, fax 09-978-2001 ($$$$).

The only B&B right in the city center is Aspen House. They call it a boutique budget hotel and that's an apt description – it offers basic, contemporary accommodation and is a good value. There are twin, double and triple rooms with en-suite bathrooms, as well as single, double and triple rooms with shared facilities. www.aspenhouse.co.nz, 62 Emily Place, ☎ 09-379-6633 ($$-$$$).

The largest backpacker's hostel in the city is Auckland Central Backpackers, and they have made every effort to fill travelers needs – there's an Internet café, a travel center, currency exchange, and huge notice boards for buying and selling cars or tagging along on rides. There is the usual assortment of rooms, including some with en-suite bathrooms. www.acb.co.nz, 229 Queen Street (at Darby), ☎ 09-358-4877, fax 09-358-4872 ($).

Not nearly as huge is Albert Park Backpackers. Still in the city center, there are both small and large dorms, and doubles and twins that are made up with sheets and duvets. bakpak@albertpark.co.nz, 27 Victoria Street East, ☎ 09-309-0336 ($).

The new Auckland International YHA is just down the street, with modern facilities. There are small and large dorm rooms, twins and doubles (some with en-suite bathrooms), and a large, modern kitchen. www.yha.org.nz, 5 Turner Street, ☎ 09-302-8200 ($).

Parnell

The Ascot Parnell is a lovely facility and a good choice for rooms with private bath in a B&B. It's an historic home, and the large lounge has a sunny balcony. www.ascotparnell.com, 36 St. Stephens Ave., ☎ 09-309-9012, fax 09-309-3729 ($$$$).

Parnell's Village Motor Lodge is a large, rambling lodge with studios, and one- and two-bedroom self-contained units. This is a good option for staying in a trendy area without spending huge amounts. www.parnellmotorlodge.co.nz, 2 St. Stephens Ave., ☎ 09-377-1463, fax 09-373-4192 ($$).

Ponsonby

Amitees on Ponsonby B&B is an urban-style boutique hotel that is small, friendly and family-owned. www.amiteesonponsonby.co.nz, 237 Ponsonby Road, ☎/fax 09-378-6325 ($$$).

One of my favorite backpacker hostels is the Brown Kiwi, an old villa, just a short walk to the cafés and bars on Ponsonby Road. It's small and friendly and there is a garden to relax in. The owners are very helpful and accommodating. www.brownkiwi.co.nz, 7 Prosford Street, ☎ 09-378-0191 ($).

At the Airport

The Jet Inn is very convenient and modern, with a large swimming pool and a 24-hour courtesy shuttle. www.jetinn.co.nz, 63 Westney Road, ☎ 09-275-4100 or 0800-538-466 ($$$).

Silverpoint Motor Inn is a basic airport motel, but is clean, well-kept and serves a good hot breakfast to order. www.silveroaks.co.nz, silverpoint@silveroaks.co.nz, 138 McKenzie Road, Mangere, ☎ 09-275-3499 ($$-$$$).

◆ Where to Eat

Auckland has piles of restaurants to choose from and you can find just about anything here.

In the City

There are a few spots along Queen Street, but when I'm working in town I usually duck up to High (which turns into Lorne) or O'Connell Street. On High Street, there is a long block of cafés and bagel shops.

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée	
$	under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$21-$30
$$$$	over NZ$30

As far as evening meals go, Merlot Wine Café is my favorite for wine lists. They have good food, too, and, while it's a bit pricey, it's worth it. 23 O'Connell Street, ☎ 09-309-5456 ($$$).

A couple of doors down is O'Connell Street Bistro, a fabulous, intimate place to eat that you won't soon forget. 3 O'Connell Street, ☎ 09-377-1884 ($$$).

The Belgian Beer Café has good beer and a full menu to go with it. Pleasant outside seating, too. Vulcan Lane ($$-$$$).

If all the café food is getting too much and you want to sink your teeth into a steak, you really can't beat Tony's Steak & Seafood. 27 Wellesley Street ($$-$$$).

At the Viaduct

For great seafood, go to Kermadec. Choose from either the brasserie or the fine dining section. 1st Floor, Viaduct Harbour, ☎ 09-309-0412 ($$$).

Soul Bar and Bistro is my favorite for brunch, lunch and drinks. Viaduct Harbour ($$-$$$).

Whangthai Restaurant has great Thai food and very attentive service. Viaduct House, Customs Street West ($$-$$$).

On Princes Wharf

Pasha has great food and service and comfy couches to relax in with a drink before or after eating. Shed 22, Princes Wharf, ☎ 09-355-0077 ($$$-$$$$).

Wildfire Churrasaria is about meat – they bring around skewers of meat until you can't eat anymore. The name might give away the Latin influence... and there's Latin music on the weekends. ☎ 09-353-7595 ($$$).

Parnell

If you couldn't find a café to suit downtown, you're sure to find one in Parnell. Just wander the sidewalks until one of them strikes your fancy. But, for Italian, go to Non Solo Pizza. Authentic Italian in a contemporary setting. 259 Parnell Road, ☎ 09-379-5358 ($$-$$$).

For the upmarket, linen table-clothed dinner, go to Antoine's Restaurant. All the traditional foods, including sweetbreads and gizzards. 333 Parnell Road, ☎ 09-307-8756 ($$$$).

Mission Bay

Tamaki Drive in Mission Bay is lined with restaurants and cafés. This is my neighborhood and a couple of my favorites are Mecca-Stonehouse Café, 44 Tamaki Drive, ☎ 09-578-1112 ($$-$$$); Ruan Thai, 71 Tamaki Drive, ☎ 09-521-9004 ($$-$$$); and Fish Pot (for fish and chips and takeaways), 99B Tamaki Drive, ☎ 09 528-4097 ($).

Ponsonby

My favorite coffee in New Zealand is Atomic and *the* Atomic Café is not only a fabulous place for a cuppa, but also home to some very tasty muffins and a long blackboard menu of mostly organic foods. 121 Ponsonby Road.

GPK (Gourmet Pizza Kitchen) has really good and innovative pizza (as well as other food). 234 Dominion Road, ☎ 09-623-1300 and 262 Ponsonby Road, ☎ 09-360-1113 ($$-$$$).

Sawadee Thai Restaurant is a good choice and always busy. 42 A Ponsonby Road, ☎ 09-376-0320 ($$-$$$).

SPQR is a trendy spot for lunch and dinner and has a good wine list. It's very dependable, the staff is great and it was one of the original cafés on the street. 150 Ponsonby Road, ☎ 09-360-1710 ($$-$$$).

North of Auckland

Just over the Auckland Harbour Bridge is the North Shore and, while Takapuna has a very pleasant beach and a smattering of good cafés and bars, it is Devonport that is of most interest to the visitor.

Auckland Harbour Bridge

Easily accessed by a 15-minute ferry ride, Devonport is a ritzy little town, one of Auckland's oldest suburbs and full of Victorian architecture. There are plenty of shops (including some good used-book stores), cafés and restaurants. The beach is very pretty and on a fine day nothing beats walking up to North Head for the views out to Rangitoto Island. There are plenty of gun emplacements and tunnels for exploring. The walk up to Mount Victoria also provides stunning views of the city and harbor. In February of each year the Devonport Wine and Food Festival really brings to life this little town. It runs for a weekend, and wine tasting, music and food are what's hot. There are two museums in Devonport, the Navy Museum and Jackson's Muzeum. Open daily, 10 am to 9 pm, $8 adults.

Getting to Devonport is easy on the ferry, www.fullers.co.nz, ☎ 09-367-9111. It's only 15 minutes across and runs every 30 minutes from 6 am to 11 pm daily. Bikes are free so, if you have one, take it! Once you arrive in Devonport, pop into the information center and get a map to explore the place, 3 Victoria Road, ☎ 09-446-0677.

While there are definite draws in the city center, the best part of Auckland is to the west – specifically in the Waitakere Park Ranges – a magical spot only 40 minutes away and Auckland's largest regional park. Covering over 21,000 acres, the Waitakeres are popular for walking, biking and surfing. Heading out of Auckland, aim for the Arataki Visitor Centre. You'll be outfitted with maps (*Waitakere Ranges Track Map* $8) and brochures and there is a well-stocked gift shop. At the entrance to the center is a *Pou*, a guardian post, carved by local iwi (tribes). At 11 m (35 feet), it is one of the largest in New Zealand. You can get permits and information about camping in the ranges at the visitor center. Open daily, 9 am to 5 pm during summer; 9 am to 5 pm weekends and 10 am to 4 pm weekdays in the winter. On Scenic Drive in Titirangi. ☎ 09-366-2000 or 0800-806-040.

◆ Adventures

On Water

Warning: *The beaches on the West Coast have strong rip currents and heavy surf! Be careful, and always swim between the flags*

WEST COAST BEACHES

Karekare Beach has a patrolled swimming area on the weekends and a walk that leads to Karekare Waterfall.

Piha, rugged and windswept, is the most popular surf beach on the west coast. The black iron-sand beach is great for walking (both on the beach and in the bush).

For a more extreme beach, try Bethells – exposed and rocky; if the sea is rough, you'll see its power here.

Muriwai Beach, a bit farther north, is a very popular spot for walking, running and swimming. It's black sand and long – you can walk for 48 km (30 miles)! The north end is popular with people who like to drive their cars and trucks on the beach so, for solitude, stay farther south.

Watchable wildlife: *Check out the gannet colony at Muriwai Beach. Australasian gannets breed here beginning in September. After the chicks are born, they stay at Muriwai until February or March and then head off to Australia for two to six years. There are short walking tracks to view the colony. To learn more about gannets, see the section on Cape Kidnappers, page 167.*

On Bikes

There is some great mountain biking to be done at the Woodhill Forest. There are tracks for all levels and you can ride for at least half a day without crossing the same track twice. It's a very popular spot on the weekends with Auckland riders, so if you're wishing to meet some biking buddies, here's your chance. There are bikes available for hire at the forest, and it's advisable to pick up a forest map. Turn off SH16 at Woodhill and follow the signs.

On Horses

Horse treks are available on the beach at Muriwai with the Muriwai Riding Centre. Depart at 10 am and 1:30 pm, $70 per person, bookings are essential. ☎ 09-411-8480.

Canyoning

AWOL Canyoning Adventures leads trips into the Piha canyon. You'll abseil under waterfalls, do some jumps, explore caves, take a rockslide on your bum – what else? No previous experience is required and, even if you chicken out of of it all, you'll be in a fabulously beautiful place, and you'll look cool in your wetsuit, helmet and harness. From $125. www.awoladventures.co.nz, ☎ 09-834-0501 or 0800-462-965.

Another option for canyoning is with Canyonz. They run trips both in the Waitakeres and on the Coromandel Peninsula. In the Waitakere Range's Blue Canyon, there are 18 waterfalls! It starts with a bush walk and then you hit the water with rock slides, rope swings and abseil. After lunch, it's more of the same, but bigger. From $125. www.canyonz.co.nz, ☎ 09-630-2776 or 0800-422-696.

With Wine

The Henderson Valley and Kumeu are home to some fabulous wineries.

Don't miss Kumeu River. The Brajkovich family has been making wine here since 1944 and is one of the most respected families of wine in New Zealand. Definitely try the Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. And don't pass up the Merlot. 550 SH16, Kumeu, ☎ 09-412-8415.

Matua Valley regularly makes very lovely wine at affordable prices and the tasting room is friendly and inviting. Waikoukou Valley Road, ☎ 09-411-8301. Next door is the Hunting Lodge restaurant, which has very good food. ☎ 09-411-8259 ($$$).

Local products: *BeesOnline Honey Centre & Café is a celebration of all things bee-related. Traveling around New Zealand, you may see many bee and honey stores and shops, but this one is new and classy and not only full of bees and bee products, but has a fabulous café and educational area. Definitely worth a stop; open daily, 9 am to 5 pm. SH16, Waimauku, ☎ 09-411-7953.*

Hauraki Gulf Islands

If you fly into Auckland during daylight hours, you can't help but notice all the islands dotting the sea – there are more than 50. Most of them are easily accessible from Auckland (see *Getting Here By Boat* section above, page 55).

Watchable Wildlife

Wallaby

Tiritiri Matangi, four km (under three miles) off the Whangaparaoa Peninsula, is a predator-free conservation area planted with native trees and home to many endangered birds, including the little spotted kiwi, takahe, saddleback, kokako, North Island robin, brown teal and stitchbird. It's a magical place, and one of the most successful conservation projects anywhere. Ferry service is by Fuller's from either Gulf Harbour or Auckland.

One of the larger Hauraki Gulf islands, Kawau Island is home to Mansion House, the home of the first Governor

General of New Zealand, Sir George Grey. Around 1870, Grey imported more than a few exotic plants and, of all things, wallabies. An interesting addition to the landscape, the wallabies are destructive of the forest and seedlings, along with worms and insects – the diet of weka and kiwi. Two of the species of wallaby are threatened in their homeland, Australia. Efforts are being made to repatriate the animals – pests here, but protected there. It's a very popular yachting destination – the sheltered bays are often dotted with anchored sailboats.

Cone-shaped Rangitoto is only 600 years old, formed by volcanic activity, and is just 10 km (six miles) northeast of the city. It has the world's largest pohutukawa forest, interesting lava caves, and, because of the terrain, very few plants or birds. The walk to the top (about an hour) offers fabulous views of the area.

◆ Waiheke Island

Similar in size to Hong Kong, Waiheke was home to some of Auckland's fringe – the artists and alternative-lifestylers – during the 1960s and 1970s. Then it became popular with the well-heeled business types and wine and olive growers and now, while still an easy-going place to hang out, is one of the trendier "suburbs" of Auckland.

Getting Here

Fullers runs regular ferry service from downtown Auckland and Half Moon Bay to Matiatia Bay, the "gateway" to Waiheke, www.fullers.co.nz, ☎ 09-367-9111.

Subritzkyline operates passenger and vehicle service from Half Moon Bay to Kennedy Point, www.subritzky.co.nz, ☎ 09-534-5663.

Information Sources

The Waiheke Island Information Centre is in Oneroa, 2 Korora Road, ☎ 09-372-1234, fax 09-372-9919.

You can rent scooters or bikes to ride around, though it is a bit hilly. There are beaches, art galleries and wineries. The walk at Stony Batter will take you through old gun emplacements and tunnels. Waiheke is a good destination close to the city

(with fast and efficient ferry service). If you can't spend a few nights out here, then at least head over for a day trip. A range of island tour companies that offer sightseeing trips around the island meet the passenger ferries. It's a good idea to book in advance, particularly if you want to do a wine tour. Contact Ananda Tours for art, wine, or general tours, ☎ 09-372-7530. Fullers also runs tours in conjunction with ferry service (see contact details above). You can ride in the open-sided Tuk Tuk Taxi around the island – they'll do wine tours and scenic rides. ☎/fax 09-372-6127.

There is also a bus service on the island that can take you to most of the attractions.

Adventures

ON WATER

You can take a half- or full-day guided kayak trip with The Kayak Company. It's a great way to poke in and out of the bays and enjoy Waiheke island from the water side. Prices begin at $60 per person. www.thekayakcompany.co.nz, ☎ 09-372-2112.

WITH WINE

Some of New Zealand's best red wine – Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Malbec and Cabenet Franc – comes from Waiheke.

My Favorite Wineries

Growing 14 varieties of olives as well wine, Kennedy Point Vineyard provides one of the friendliest tasting room facilities on the island. They make lunch platters and you can choose between sitting on the deck or in the vineyard and olive grove. ☎ 09-372-5600.

Mudbrick Vineyard makes 14,000 bottles of wine a year. Enough, they say, to supply their customers, their restaurant and their staff. The restaurant is a perfect spot for lunch and dinner. ☎ 09-372-9050.

You can't come to Waiheke to taste wine and not go to Te Whau. The wine, the place, the surroundings are all exquisite. ☎ 09-372-7191.

Where to Stay

There are many B&Bs on the island and a few motels. You might also want to check out www.waihekeunlimited.co.nz for upper-end accommodation options.

There are studios, condominiums, villas and chalets at Waiheke Island Resort, as well as a tennis court and heated swimming pool. It's one of the larger facilities on the island. www.waihekeresort.co.nz, 4 Bay Road, ☎ 09-372-0011 or 0800-924-4353 ($$$$).

For more affordable options, consider Beachside Lodge, with apartments that sleep up to five. www.ki-wi.co.nz/beachside.htm, 48 Kiwi Street, ☎ 09-372-9884 ($$$).

Midway Motel has studios and one-bedroom units, as well as holiday homes. There is also a pool and a spa. www.waihekemidway.net, 1 Whakarite Road, ☎ 09-372-8023 or 0800-372-8023, fax 09-372-9669 ($$-$$$).

Punga Lodge has affordable self-contained units in native bush. They also offer a homestay option, where you stay with a family. www.ki-wi.co.nz/punga.htm. 223 Oceanview Road, ☎ 09-372-6675 ($$-$$$).

Where to Eat

The restaurant at Mudbrick Vineyard has a great menu. Many of the fresh ingredients come right from the garden; there is indoor and outdoor seating and the view is great. Open for lunch and dinner, Church Bay Road, ☎ 09-372-9050 ($$$).

Te Whau Vineyard Restaurant is top of the heap, for sure. Not only is the food to die for, but the wine list will have you drooling. It's a special occasion to go there and one not to miss. 218 Te Whau Drive, ☎ 09-372-7191 ($$$-$$$$).

There are quite a few cafés in the little village of Oneroa, but the Lazy Lounge is my choice, with its totally eclectic clientele and menu. This is where the local poets spin yarns on Sunday night and where the sports teams celebrate victory. It's a good spot for lunch or a beer in the garden. 139 Oceanview Road, ☎ 09-372-5132 ($-$$).

Northland

Introduction

Known as The Birthplace of a Nation, Northland's natural beauty is equaled by its fascinating history and culture. This is where Kupe, the legendary Maori explorer, first arrived and where, in 1840, the Treaty of Waitangi between Maori and the British Crown was signed. Inland, Tane Mahuta (the largest living kauri tree in New Zealand) and other towering kauri trees grow tall. The waterways, seashores and islands of Northland all demand attention and, as a subtropical region, Northland regularly enjoys the warmest temperatures in the country. A long, narrow peninsula, this is a big region with over 1,700 km (1,054 miles) of coastline. Exploring here can take days, or months – give it as much time as you have.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Getting Here 76
- Information Sources 76
- The Kauri Coast 77
- The Far North 87
- The Bay of Islands 95

Legend says *that Kupe, an ancient Maori hero, went on an expedition to prove his fishing prowess. He pulled up the world's largest fish – the North Island of New Zealand. If you turn a map of New Zealand upside down, you can envision Wellington as the fish's head, Taranaki and East Cape as its fins and Northland, its tail or Te Hiku o Te Ika. In his waka (canoe), Kupe and his crew made landfall on the shores of Hokianga Harbour. Kupe's wife, Kuramarotini, described the land as "Aotearoa," Land of the Long White Cloud.*

Northland has a population of 139,143 and its economy is based on agriculture – over half the region's three million acres of land are devoted to dairy, beef and sheep farming; forestry and wood operations are also beginning to gather steam. The fertile soil and the climate provide ideal growing conditions for radiata pine, which mature in 25 years or less – faster than anywhere else in the world. The forestry in-

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1. Cape Reinga Walk
2. Northernmost Point
3. Cape Karikari Walk, Mt. Puheke, Beaches, Herekino Forest & Gorge
4. Kaitaia Airport, Okahu Winery, Reef Point, Ancient Kauri Kingdom, Gumdiggers Park
5. Herekino Forest, Herekino Gorge
6. Mangonui Whaling Museum, Kahoe Scenic Drive
7. Whangaroa Scenic Loop
8. Puketi & Omahuta Forests, Kauri Sanctuary
9. Kerikeri Mission House & Station, Rewa's Village, Stone Store, Rainbow Falls, Fairy Pools, Marsden Estates Winery, Waiangi Forest & Treaty House
10. Vintage Steam Railway, Ruapekapeka Forest
11. Kawiti Glow-worm Caves
12. Cape Brett Walkway
13. Mission House, Wairere Boulders Nature Park
14. Waipoua Forest Kauri Sanctuary
15. Marlborough & Kaihu Kauri Forests, Trounson Park Scenic
16. Kai Iwi Lakes, Sea Walk to Hokianga Harbour
17. Opuawhanga Forest, Sandy Bay
18. Whangarei Forest
19. Dargaville Pioneer Museum, Woodturners Studio & Gallery, Zizania Mill
20. Montgomery, Whenuamui, Parahi & Pukekohe Hill Scenic Reserves
21. Waipu Caves, Wildlife Refuge & Seaside Resort, Ruakaka Forest, Scottish Highlander Heritage Settlement
22. Bream Head Scenic Reserve, Ocean Beach, Smugglers Bay
23. Matakohe Kauri Museum
24. Hen & Chicken Islands
25. Ascension Vineyard-Café, Heron's Flight, Hyperion Wines, Mahurangi Estate, Original Sheepworld
26. Pouto Peninsula & Lighthouse

dustry (already generating $500 million a year) is expected to increase by a factor of six in the next 10 years. Marine farming and aquaculture is also a developing sector.

Did you know? *When Maori introduce themselves, they give not only their name, but what mountain, river and waka (tribe) they belong to.*

Getting Here

◆ By Air

There are three airports in Northland: Whangarei, Kerikeri (Bay of Islands) and Kaitaia. All have regular scheduled service from Auckland. Service is provided by Air New Zealand, ☎ 0800-737-000, www.airnewzealand.co.nz, Mountain Air & Air Kaitaia, ☎ 09-256-7025, and Salt Air-Bay of Islands, ☎ 09-402-8338.

◆ By Car

Two main roads in Northland make up the Twin Coast Discovery Highway – SH12 on the west coast and SH1 on the east. Coming from Auckland, I suggest you drive up the west coast and down the east. This way, you explore the less populated, more rugged coast first, and, on your return, will gradually reenter the urban sprawl of Auckland.

◆ By Bus

Regular bus service to and from Northland is provided by Northliner Express, www.northliner.co.nz, ☎ 09-438-4833 (Whangarei), 09-402-7857 (Bay of Islands) and 09-307-5873 (Auckland), and Intercity Coachlines, www.intercitycoach.co.nz, ☎ 09-913-6100.

Information Sources

Destination Northland is the regional tourism organization and can be visited at www.northland.org.nz. Information centers abound and are listed for each area.

The Kauri Coast

The Kauri Coast isn't about big money, fancy lodges and snobby wine bars. This coast is about having an unspoiled, un-commercialized experience. Spend some time poking around and chatting to the folks and you'll understand that, for most of them, life is more about lifestyle than money.

But money was once quite a draw – during the late 1800s 75% of New Zealand's gross domestic product came from this area. It was the massive kauri trees that were exploited and brought riches, first from wood (popular for shipbuilding and as sawn timber) and then from kauri gum, the amber resin from the tree. Kauri gum looks like cut and polished crystallized honey and collections can be seen at the Kauri Museum and the Dargaville Museum (see pages 78 and 80). While kauri wood is spectacular (both for its patterns and straightness of growth), its gum is equally breathtaking.

Did you know? *Gumboots, that great Kiwi icon, got their name from the leather boots that the kauri gum diggers wore.*

Tall ships that came from Europe to the Dargaville coast brought passengers and supplies and left filled with kauri wood and kauri gum. When traveling along the kauri coast, you can get a real feel for the cycle of growth and the passage of time – visit the museums in Matakohe and Dargaville for an understanding of the past; see remaining kauri giants growing in the forest and stop at the woodturner's studio to see how swamp kauri is being used now.

Swamp Kauri

Swamp kauri is timber from ancient trees that has been recovered from underground.

While the Europeans can be blamed for harvesting plenty of old-growth trees, before any man set foot on New Zealand cataclysmic events felled many more trees than were left standing. Over the eons, those trees became buried in the swamps. Carbon dating of swamp kauri from the Dargaville area has shown them to be over 50,000 years

old. The wood of the swamp kauri is a deeper, richer brown than new wood.

◆ Matakohe

Matakohe's claim to fame is The Kauri Museum. In addition to the world's largest kauri gum collection, there is a massive slab of a tree called Balderston kauri that was killed by lightning; interpretive displays of kauri history; a huge collection of kauri furniture; displays on life of the kauri bush people; and samples of wood from other podocarp trees. There is also a turn-of-the-century schoolhouse on the grounds and a very extensive gift shop. Open daily, 9 am to 5 pm (longer hours in summer). $12 adult, $3 child. www.kauri-museum.com, Church Road, ☎ 09-431-7417, fax 09-431-6969.

Did you know? *Kauri gum was used to make varnish, dentures, linoleum floor coverings and glue, among other things.*

Where to Stay

Just a few minutes' walk from the museum, Matakohe Top 10 Holiday Park has the usual range of holiday-park accommodations. MatakoheHolidayPark@xtra.co.nz, Church Road, ☎/fax 09-431-6431 or 0800-431-6431 ($-$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Per room, double occupancy	
$	under NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$101-$175
$$$$	over NZ$175

Petite Provence is very new and very French. It is set in farmland beside native bush and has harbor views. Dinner (Mediterranean/vegetarian) is available and there are queen rooms with en-suite bathroom. Tinopai Road, ☎/fax 09-431-7552 ($$$).

June and Edsel at Weber's Matakohe Homestay are a Kiwi couple who volunteer at the Kauri Museum. You will enjoy your stay here. Breakfast and dinner are included. Barlow Lane, ☎ 09-431-7288 ($$$).

Did you know? *Ruawai, on the Wairoa River between Matakohe and Dargaville, is the Kumara Capital of New Zealand (kumara is a sweet potato).*

◆ Dargaville

Dargaville is the service center for this part of Northland and is just west of the junction of SH14 (from Whangarei) and and SH12. A few miles north on SH12 is Scottys Camp Road, which leads out to Baylys Beach; south from town, Pouto Road heads down the peninsula to Pouto. (It's paved for about half the way.)

Rice grass *on the banks of the river comes from the tall sailing ships. Sailing to New Zealand, ships needed ballast, so they were loaded with bricks. The bricks came from Asia and contained rice seeds. When the ships arrived in Dargaville, the ballast was tossed overboard and kauri logs were loaded. The rice seeds took hold and – voila – rice grass.*

Information Sources

The Kauri Coast Information Centre is located on Normanby Street in Dargaville. ☎ 09-439-8360.

Adventures

At 107 km (66 miles), Ripiro is New Zealand's longest driveable beach. It stretches from Maunganui Bluff to Kaipara Harbour and is edged with colorful sandstone cliffs. Go on a trip with someone who knows the tides and where the quicksand is – having a guide is also a good way to learn about the more than 150 shipwrecks in the area.

ON WATER

When I was talking to Nelsa at Baylys Beach Holiday Park, she said, "One thing that makes this region different is if you go fishing, you'll catch a fish." Common fish are: snapper, travali, kowhai, kingfish, gunnard, octopus, shark, "whatever takes the bait, really." If you don't have equipment, or don't know what you're doing, talk to Nelsa and Maurice. They'll arrange a "surfcasting safari" and supply your gear, teach you how to use it and provide lunch. Plus, you can bring your fish back and they'll smoke it for you.

ON 4X4

If you need to blow the cobwebs out of your head, hire a quad bike and cruise along Ripiro beach. This is one of only two places in New

Zealand where you can rent quad bikes without a guide. Ask at the holiday park about where to see some of the shipwrecks. $60 per hour. www.baylysbeach@xtra.co.nz, 24 Seaview Road, ☎/fax 09-439-6349.

Sightseeing & Shopping

Try your hand at woodturning in The Woodturners Studio and Gallery. Rick Taylor has been working as a woodturner for nearly 30 years and offers one-on-one instruction for all levels of experience. The gallery features Rick's work and also sells paper that is handmade from wood shavings (where else can you buy paper that is made from the wood of a 3,800-year-old swamp kauri tree?). www.thewoodtunersstudio.co.nz, 4 Murdoch Street, ☎ 09-439-4975.

The Dargaville Museum is a fine local museum with the usual collection of furniture, doctors' instruments (featuring an unusually large collection of speculums and dilators) and old tools. In 1985, when the *Rainbow Warrior* was getting ready to set sail for the Tuamotus in French Polynesia to protest French nuclear testing, it was blown up in Auckland Harbour. Outside the Dargaville Museum are the masts of the boat and within the museum are other relics.

There have been up to 156 shipwrecks along the Dargaville Coast, nicknamed "Shipwreck Alley." There is apparently evidence that a Portuguese caravel wreck is embedded in the coast. If that's true, it means that the Portuguese arrived in New Zealand perhaps more than 100 years before Abel Tasman in 1642.

Where to Stay

The Dargaville Motel is one of those dependable, nothing-fancy kind of motels with studio units and fully equipped kitchens. Breakfast is available. 217 Victoria Street, ☎/fax 09-439-7734 ($$).

Awakino Point Boutique Motel offers complimentary breakfast. It's a small facility with three units on a "farmlet," just outside of town. Another plus is the gas BBQ. awakinopoint@xtra.co.nz, SH12. ☎/fax 09-439-7870 ($$).

The Northern Wairoa Hotel is one of those old-style hotels, with a casino and 29 rooms – many with en-suite bathroom. A good affordable option. northernwairoahotel@win.co.nz, Victoria Street, ☎ 09-439-8923, fax 09-439-8925 ($).

Where to Eat

Dargaville has a little way to go before it's on the culinary map of New Zealand, but there is the obligatory Chinese takeout and steak house. My choice is the Blah Blah Blah Café and Bar which wins for name and menu. It's eclectic, with gourmet pizzas and great coffee. Not a bad bar, either. Normandy Street, ☎ 09-439-6300 ($-$$).

◆ Baylys Beach

Where to Stay

Denim Digs is a modern "beach pad" with wonderful views and fully equipped kitchen. lorraine@impaktmarketing.co.nz, Coates Avenue, ☎ 09-439-1400 ($$$).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée	
$	under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$21-$30
$$$$	over NZ$30

For a real Kiwi beach experience 1970s-style, go to 76 Seaview Road Beach. It's 80 years old, right near the beach and a real bargain. www.holidayhouses.co.nz, 76 Seaview Road, ☎ 09-439-7022 ($$).

The Hunky Dory has accommodation with shared facilities and a "Map Lounge," where you can pore over maps of New Zealand and beyond. Close to the Baylys Bay shop and food. aymditch@paradise.net.nz, ☎ 09-439-0922 ($).

Baylys Beach Holiday Park has the full range of accommodation options, from two-bed backpacker-type units to motels with bath and kitchen. There's space for your campervan or tent, too. These folks will happily arrange for fishing trips, horseback riding, tours around the area and there are always the quad bikes for rent. www.baylysbeach@xtra.co.nz, 24 Seaview Road, ☎/fax 09-439-6349 ($-$$).

Where to Eat

The Funky Fish Café and Bar features burgers, panini, pasta, ice cream. Seaview Road, ☎ 09-439-8883 ($-$$).

The owners of the Funky Fish opened another restaurant in 2003, called Sharky's Bites and Bits. It's on Seaview Road coming into the beach. ☎ 09-439-4549 ($-$$).

◆ Kai Iwi Lakes

These are three fresh water "dune" lakes about 40 minutes north of Dargaville. The beaches are white silicone sand and are not only safe for swimming, but are popular for other water sports too: the local waterski club is based here; quite a lot of dinghy sailing goes on; and, in the summer, you can rent canoes at the (very small) store at Lake Taharoa. The lakes are also good for trout fishing, and there is a nice walking track (about three hours) from Lake Taharoa, although a relatively strong sense of direction is required as the track is not particularly well-marked. The Tasman Sea Walkway (it goes to Hokianga Harbour) is accessible through a neighboring farm – get information at the Kai Iwi Lakes camp office. A lovely spot for camping and camp spaces are limited, so it pays to book ahead at the information center in Dargaville (on Normanby Street, ☎ 09-439-8360).

◆ Kauri Forests

Continuing north, you soon enter the kauri forests. It might sound sappy, but when walking through the kauri forest, among the ferns and mosses and palms, I feel surrounded by strength, power, and spirit.

Information Sources

A visit to the Department of Conservation Kauri Coast Visitor Centre is a must! As in all DoC centers, the staff knows their stuff and will patiently direct you to where you want to go and what you want to see. There is a small shop with nature-related gifts and an interesting interpretive display area. At the Waipoua Forest Headquarters, SH12, ☎ 09-439-3011, fax 09-439-3016.

Trounson Kauri Park is one of six mainland "islands." A mainland island is a section of land that is managed by DoC for predator control and eradication, bringing the forest back to its natural state. Trounson has over 1,100 acres of mixed kauri/podocarp forest and is less crowded than the Waipoua Forest. The interpretive panels at Trounson are poetic and the 40-minute wander through the bush is a must-do walk. There are tent-camping sites at Trounson Park. The Trounson Kauri Park is on Trounson Park Road, off SH12.

Did you know? *"Rickers" is the term given to young kauri trees. They are called rickers until they leave their teenage years and begin to shed their lower branches.*

Tane Mahuta, already a mature tree at the time of Christ

The Waipoua Forest is home to some of the largest and oldest kauri trees, as well as the largest population of brown kiwi in Northland. When I've stayed at the cabins, I've been woken by the shrill screams of kiwis – you'd swear someone was killing a baby! Among the trees of the Waipoua, the most famous is Tane Mahuta, "Lord of the Forest." It is the tallest surviving kauri tree (17.7 meters/57 feet at the first branch) in New Zealand and is just five minutes off the road, about 10 km (six miles) from the DoC Visitor Centre on SH12. Closer to the DoC visitor center is Te Matua Ngahere, "Father of the Forest." This is the second-largest living kauri tree, but has a bigger girth (five meters/16 feet compared to 4.4 meters/14 feet) than Tane Mahuta. It's about a 20-minute walk from the security-guarded car park to Te Matua Ngahere. There is also a 10-minute walk from the same car park to the formation called the Four Sisters.

Continuing on from the Four Sisters, you can walk to the Yakas formation, named for a pioneering bushman in the area. If the track is open, you can walk the three hours back to the visitor center, or, alternatively, begin at the visitor center and head up. This track is very dependent on weather, so check in the office as to its condition.

Where to Stay

Waipoua Lodge is on SH 12 about 16 km (10 miles) from Tane Mahuta. It's been a traveler's lodge since 1890 and accommodation is in the old farm buildings.

It's very nice and the food is fabulous. www.waipoualodge.co.nz, SH 12, ☎ 09-439-0422 ($$$$).

The Kauri Coast Holiday Park has accommodation ranging from tent sites to standard cabins and cottages with kitchen and bath. It's a wonderfully clean, tidy, pleasant place set beside the river in the forest. Tubes are available for river play! Just five km (three miles) from Trounson Park, this makes a very nice option as a place to stay with stuff to do. Guided night walks are available ($15 adults; $9 children). Tthe last time I went on one, we saw two kiwi. It was magic! Kauricoast.top10@xtra.co.nz, Trounson Park Road, ☎/fax 09-439-0621 or 0800-807-200 ($-$$).

About two km (1½ miles) north of Trounson Park Road is the Kaihu Farm Hostel. There's a great deck with views of the countryside, glow worms, double and twin rooms, a blackboard menu (with yummy things like curry and masala), farm fresh eggs and plenty of walks. From here, you can do four-hour loop walks to Trounson Park, Kai Iwi Lakes and the Kaihu River – this is a perfect base for reasonable day walks. Kaihufarm@clear.net.nz, SH12, ☎ 09-439-4004 ($).

The cabins at the Waipoua Kauri Forest Campground make a perfect base to explore the kauri forest. These DoC cabins are simple and newly renovated and come with basic cooking equipment. There are also tent sites and a few campervan/caravan sites. Best to book in advance during the busy season. ☎ 09-439-3011, fax 09-439-3016 ($).

◆ Hokianga Harbour

Just 25 minutes from Tane Mahuta is the Omapere Hill – coming over it on a clear day, you will be met with tremendous views of the Hokianga Harbour and sand hills. It is spectacular!

A straight drive from Auckland to Hokianga on SH12 will take about three hours.

Information Sources

In addition to getting advice and making reservations, you can watch a short film about Opo, a bottlenose dolphin who, in 1955-56, came into the harbor and played with the kids, at the very helpful Hokianga Information Centre, hokiangainfo@xtra.co.nz, SH12 in Omapere, ☎ 09-405-8869.

Adventures

ON WATER

Sand dunes on Hokianga Harbour

For a really fun activity, ride with Hokianga Express across the harbor and go sand tobogganing. The sand dunes stretch forever and all you do is climb the hill, lie down on the board, keep your head up and mouth closed and go. The boat will return to pick you up at a designated time. There is plenty of beach and dune walking to do, so pack a picnic (and sun block) and go for the day – this is one of the most cost-effective activities around. $20 adults, $10 children. Pete Clark, the boat's owner, also offers fishing trips, both inside the harbor and outside the bar, and scenic trips around the harbor. His father was a lighthouse keeper at six of the lights around New Zealand and Pete has plenty of stories to tell, including some from living at Cape Reinga. Fishing is $100 per hour to charter the boat. Contact Pete directly or call the Hokianga Information Centre. Hkexpress@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 09-405-8872.

Hokianga Blue is a kayak company based in Rawene that will come to Omapere or Opononi, depending on what you want to do and where you're staying. They offer short (two-hour to full-day adventures. You can also rent the kayaks without a guide. In addition to the harbor, there are a number of rivers to explore. Prices for guided options start at $35 per person. www.hokiangablue.co.nz, 49 Parnell Street (next to the Fire Station), Rawene, ☎ 09-405-7675 or 021-263-1171.

Where to Stay

The Copthorne Hotel & Resort Hokianga is a fabulous old tourist hotel right on the water. There is a range of room types available and the sweeping lawns, pool and beach are all enticing. Bring a book and stay awhile. www.omapere.co.nz, ☎ 09 405-8737 ($$-$$$).

Just a few kilometers north of Omapere is Opononi and the Opononi Resort Hotel. It's right on the side of the road, and, while it doesn't look like much when you drive up, the motel units (with private decks) are tucked away in the mature garden out back. Backpacker's hostel and budget accommodation is also available and there is a full-service, licensed restaurant. Opononi-hotel@xtra.co.nz, 19 SH12 (beside the Four Square market), ☎ 09-405-8858 or 0800-116-565 ($-$$).

Where to Eat

There are à la carte and bar meals available at the Copthorne Hotel & Resort. Main dishes include Hokianga crayfish and other local seafood, as well as the usual beef, lamb, pork and chicken ($$-$$$).

A similar menu and prices are available at the Opononi Resort Hotel, SH12, ☎ 09-405-8858.

◆ Rawene

Leaving Opononi and heading north, you have two options: taking SH12 to Kaikohe and joining SH1 just south of Lake Omapere, or taking the ferry across from Rawene and continuing north on the coastal road, which joins SH1 in Kaitaia. Both are pleasant drives, through lush forest and farmland, but I lean toward taking the ferry and continuing to explore on the secondary route. Either way, it's worth a detour to visit Wairere Boulders Nature Park, above, a new attraction that has received nothing but good comments. It's a bit of a basalt boulder wonderland stretching for 1½ km (nearly a mile) – huge boulders thrown here and there in all sorts of formations with all sorts of markings. The tracks are unguided and there are two loops – one hour or three. $10 adults, $5 children. www.wairereboulders.co.nz, 14 km (nine miles) off SH1 near Horeke on McDonnell Road, ☎/fax 09-401-9935.

The drive north from Omapere to Rawene, and beyond, for that matter, is a lovely one through sweeping hills. Rawene is the third-oldest town in New Zealand and a picture-perfect end-of-the-road kind of place. This is the spot to get on the car-ferry to Kohukohu. There are a couple of antique shops, and the Boat Shed Café, which has a very full blackboard menu and sells locally made, high-quality art and crafts. 8 Clendon Esplanade. ☎ 09-405-7728.

The ferry ride to Kohukohu is $2 for foot passengers and $14 per car. It leaves Rawene on the half-hour and is a 15-minute passage. Kohukohu is a small town, with a few artists' studios and a couple of places to eat. The Palace Flophouse and Grill has the best hamburgers around. On Kohukohu Road, ☎ 09-405-5858.

Where to Stay

The Rawene Motor Camp has tourist cabins, tent and power sites and a small shop. rawenemotorcamp@hotmail.com, 1 Marmon Street West, ☎/fax 09-405-7720 ($).

Across the harbor, The Tree House Backpackers Lodge is a delightful, tucked-away little spot with cabins, tent sites and a lodge. Turn left after getting off the ferry in Kohukohu Rawene, then follow the sign marked for Mitimiti. www.treehouse.co.nz, 168 West Coast Road, ☎ 09-405-5855 ($).

The Far North

◆ Ahipara

Following the coastal route as it meanders from Kohukohu north, you will skirt the Herekino Forest and pass through the Herekino Gorge. Just after that, you reach Ahipara, a fabulous beach community and the "high growth" location for the far north. It's at the very bottom of Ninety Mile Beach and many of the accommodations have superb sea and sunset views. In addition to fishing and swimming, it's a popular surf location and I think it's the perfect place to spend a few days. It's about 14 km (nine miles) from Kaitaia and a much more attractive place to stay if you are going to explore Ninety Mile Beach and/or Cape Reinga.

Ahipara is the tribal land for the Te Rarawa and its name means "Sacred Fire." The story goes that an ancient fire was kept burning for the

village on the site where the present-day school is. The first Maori arrived on the *waka* (war canoe) *Tinana*, which landed at Tauroa on the south end of the reef past Shipwreck Bay.

Information Sources

There is no official information center, but the Ahipara Adventure Centre serves as one. ☎ 09-409-2055.

Adventures

ON WATER

You shouldn't need a guidebook to tell you what seems painfully obvious. Ahipara is at the base of Ninety Mile Beach – you might want to just put on your suit and go to the beach. It's safe for swimming and there are rock pools for kids.

Fishing

For those serious about fishing, charter *Wildcat 1* for the day. It takes up to five passengers, so with a group to split the $800 price tag is reasonable for a professional fishing excursion. It's deep-sea game fishing, and you'll be going for marlin, kingfish, grouper, and hapuka, to name a few. The guides have been at it for years, so you'll be in good hands. You can book through the Adventure Centre (see above) or contact them directly. www.ahipara.co.nz/wildcat, ☎ 09-409-4729 or 025-471-138.

ON FOOT

There's a good five-hour walk around Reef Point that takes you past a big sand dune and to some good places to dig for kauri gum. Access is towards the sand dune from Shipwreck Bay.

BY 4X4

Tua Tua Tours offers guided trips ranging from 1½ to three hours and has bikes that can take doubles. You can ride on the beach or opt for a "Gumfields Safari." Prices begin at $80, for a single rider on the short trip. www.ahipara.co.nz/tuatuatours, Ahipara Road, ☎/fax 09-409-4875.

Ahipara Adventure Centre rents quad bikes without a guide, but guided tours are available if you're not up to going it alone. Prices begin at $60 per hour and the rates go down with additional time. These

folks also offer 4x4 Unimog (like a quad bike but carries passengers) trips over the Ahipara gumfields. www.ahipara.co.nz, Takahe Street, ☎ 09-409-2055.

The Adventure Centre also rents Blo Karts, which are land yachts.

Where to Stay

There are quite a few beachy kinds of places in Ahipara.

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Per room, double occupancy	
$	under NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$101-$175
$$$$	over NZ$175

There are two units with kitchen and bath (sleeping up to eight) on the beach at Foreshore Lodge. These folks have the reputation of not only being good hosts, but of enjoying a lot of return business, which is always a good sign. In addition to full kitchen, BBQ facilities are available. www.ahipara.co.nz/foreshore, Foreshore Road, ☎ 09-409-4860 ($$-$$$).

Baylinks Lodge Motel is a small, clean, well cared for place right on the 8th hole of the golf course. All units have kitchen and bath and there is a lovely garden and BBQ area. Just a few steps to the beach. www.ahipara.co.nz/baylinks, 115 Takahe Street, ☎/fax 09-409-4694 or 0508-265-100 ($$).

The Ahipara Motorcamp and Backpackers has a range of accommodation, from tent sites to small tourist units and on-site campers. www.ahipara.co.nz/pinetree, Takahe Road, ☎ 09-409-4864, fax 09-409-2118 ($-$$).

For a budget option, I really like Endless Summer. It's in an 1880s kauri lodge and just became a backpackers in December 2002. There are twins, doubles, and shares and, if you are smart, you'll book ahead and ask for the double with the phenomenal sea view. The kitchen is big and friendly, there's a massive kauri table on the patio and the lounge is comfortable. Owners Anna and Blaine also have surfboards and wet suits for rent, and free-to-use boogie boards. It's just across the street from the beach and a great place to stay that doesn't feel like a backpackers at all. www.endlesssummer.co.nz, 245 Foreshore Road, ☎ 09-409-4181 ($).

◆ Kaitaia

Information

The well-stocked Information Far North can be reached at visitorinfo@fndc.govt.nz, and is located at Jaycee Park, South Road, ☎ 09-408-0879.

The Department of Conservation has an office on SH1 right near McKenzie Welding. They are open weekdays, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. ☎ 09-408-6014.

Kaitaia is the service center for the Far North and usually registers the warmest winter temperatures in the country. It is the gateway to Ninety Mile Beach and Cape Reigna, but I think Ahipara is a nicer place to stay. The population is about 7,000 and the major industries are dairy, farming, timber milling, forestry, fishing and tourism.

Sightseeing

The Ancient Kauri Kingdom is seven km (four miles) north of Kaitaia in Awanui. All the buses stop here – it's where they rinse the sand off their buses after driving on the beach. There are plenty of things made of kauri for sale and there is a café. It's the last stop for postcards, stamps, etc., before getting to Cape Reigna where you can mail a letter or card and it will be postmarked from the Kauri Kingdom. www.ancientkauri.co.nz, SH1, ☎/fax 09-406-7172.

Gumdiggers Park is just a few minutes off the road (north of Awanui) on your way to Cape Reigna and has displays explaining the kauri gum industry. There is also a collection of items made from kauri gum. 9 am to 5:30 pm daily. $7. www.gumdiggerspark.co.nz, ☎ 09-406-7166.

NINETY MILE BEACH

Though Ninety Mile Beach is really only 90 km or only 64 miles, it's still a long, impressive strip of sand! If you're touring here, it would be inexcusable to miss it.

Depending on whom you talk to, you will be told either horror stories of driving on Ninety Mile Beach, or be met with a "she'll be right" attitude. First, you do not need a 4x4 to drive on the beach, regardless of what the more conservative types would like you to believe. However, 4x4 or not, vehicles have been stuck and lost in the sand. The road to the Cape is also not quite as scary as some would like you to

believe. It is paved to Waitiki Landing, and the last 20 km (12 miles) are gravel – most rental cars aren't allowed to drive on gravel, so check into that before you head out. Also keep in mind that there aren't many petrol stops. I'd ask first at your accommodation and then at the information center (though they tend to be extremely cautious). Then, I'd stop at Mainstreet Lodge (see page 93) and talk to Kerry. She's a wealth of knowledge and welcomes inquiries, whether or not you're staying there. You can also talk to the bus drivers and ask their advice – they ought to know!

Ninety Mile Beach

Warning: *Only drive on Ninety Mile Beach at low tide! Check with the locals or bus drivers before leaving! Don't drive in the water or in soft sand.*

The second week of March is the time for the annual 60-km (36-mile) foot race on the beach from Mongonui Bluffs to Ahipara.

CAPE REINGA – TE RERENGA WAIRUA

Contrary to popular belief, Cape Reinga is not the northernmost point of New Zealand – that honor goes to Surville Cliffs, farther to the east. But that is not to say that Cape Reinga is any less important. On the contrary. Spiritually, and geographically, it is an incredibly important spot.

Geographically, it is where the Tasman Sea and the Pacific Ocean meet, with currents coming from two conflicting directions.

Spiritually, Cape Reinga is where the Maori believe their spirits go after death. Their spirits travel to the pohutukawa tree that is on the headland of Cape Reinga and slide down a root into the sea below. At Ohaua, the highest point on Three Kings Islands, the spirits climb back out of the sea, bid a final farewell to Aotearoa and return to Hawaiiki-A-Nui, the land of their ancestors.

Guided Tours

There are several tours to choose from. All of them drive on the beach, go to the lighthouse, give you a white silica-sand experience, and let you go either sand tobogganing or sledding on the dunes. The differences are in pick-up points and where some of these activities occur. A light lunch is provided on all the trips.

Wildcat Bus Tours leave from Ahipara. Trips begin with a barge trip across Pawarengarenga Harbour to explore the white silica-sand beach. They also stop at Gumdiggers Park. $55 adults. www.ahipara.co.nz/adventurecentre, ☎ 09-409-2055.

Paradise Connexion operates out of Mangonui and, in addition to the other stops, calls in at the Wagener Museum. $55 adults. Paradiseconnexion@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 09-406-0460.

Harrisons Cape Runner is based in Kaitaia, which makes the trip a little shorter, but it still includes all the important features. $40 adults. www.ahipara.co.nz/caperunner, ☎ 09-408-1033, fax 09-408-3003.

Adventures

WITH WINE

New Zealand's northernmost vineyard is Okahu Estate, just four km (two miles) south of Kaiaia. They've only got 15 acres in grapes and source most of their fruit from Hawke's Bay and Gisborne, but they've made some very rewarding wines. Stop in for a tasting at this very casual, friendly winery. Open daily, 10 am to 6 pm during the summer, Monday to Friday during the winter. www.okahuestate.co.nz, Okahu Road, ☎ 09-408-0888.

ON FOOT

Most of the popular walks here are based around Cape Reinga and Ninety Mile Beach. They vary in length from three hours to three days; DoC has maps and current information on trail conditions. If you want to do the three-day walk, Harrisons (see above) will drop you off at the starting

point and arrange to pick you up three days later. It's a good option and saves worry about your vehicle or transport and, if you get tired or rained out, they can pick you up along the road at a half-way point. The three-day trip takes you along the beach and offers a couple of different forest loops. The Cape Reinga Walkway edges three sides of the cape as well as some forest sections. There are many fantastic walks out on the peninsula, including Te Werahi Loop Walk and one out to Cape Maria van Dieman. If you enjoy walking, your feet will be itching. If you can stay longer, take a tent and do the Cape Reinga Coast Walk. If DoC is closed when you're in Kaitaia, call Kerry at Mainstreet Lodge (see below) who will also store your luggage while you tramp. Pick up a copy of *Cape Reinga and Te Paki Walks*. Shuttle service and vehicle storage are also available at Waitiki Landing, ☎ 09-409-7508.

Where to Stay

The Mainstreet Lodge is the YHA and owners Kerry and Peter refer to it as a Quality Maori Backpacker Lodge. It is the site of a Maori Cultural Centre and instruction is offered in different facets of Maori life and art. They are building a meeting house using traditional tools and building techniques. These folks are really friendly and helpful; Kerry is happy to share local knowledge even if you aren't staying. Peter leads Cape Reinga Experience (Te Ara Wairau) offering a Maori perspective on the usual cape tours. Accommodation in dorms, twins, doubles and family rooms. 237A Commerce Street, ☎ 09-408-1275, fax 09-408-1100.

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Per room, double occupancy	
$	under NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$101-$175
$$$$	over NZ$175

The Kaitaia Motor Camp has tent and power sites, 69 South Road, ☎ 09-408-1212 ($).

If you have your own transport (or you can arrange to be dropped off on a tour and picked up the next day), check into either the Pukenui Holiday Park or the Wagener Holiday Park.

The Wagener Holiday Park is 40 km (24 miles) north of Kaitaia on SH1F – on the way to the Cape – and is the site of the Wagener family homestead and museum. The accommodation is in on-site camp-

ers and backpacker hostel rooms. It's a friendly place, with a small shop and café. It's right on the beach and these folks are happy to help you organize some activities. The museum is a wacky place with treasures from a lifetime or two. www.northlandholiday.co.nz, Houhora Heads Road, ☎ 09-409-8880 ($).

The Pukenui Holiday Park is five km (three miles) farther north and has on-site campers, cabins and tourist flats. It's a short walk to the beach; there are cabins in the trees, and plenty of spots for camping. Lamb Road, Pukenui, ☎ 09-409-8803, fax 09-409-8802 ($).

Where to Eat

They say that Kaitaia is learning to make good coffee. Which is, I suppose, better than saying that Kaitaia isn't learning to make good coffee, but you're not going to have a lot of gastronomic thrills around here.

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée	
$	under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$21-$30
$$$$	over NZ$30

If the locals go out to eat, it's likely they'd go to Beachcomber Restaurant for seafood. 222 Commerce Street, ☎ 09-408-2010 ($$).

Their second choice would probably be Bushman's Hut Steakhouse at the corner of Puckey Ave and Bank Street, ☎ 09-408-4320 ($$).

The best chef is said to be at Orana Restaurant, 238 Commerce Street, ☎ 09-408-1510 ($$).

Tip: *If you're driving up to the cape and need to do those "most northern" kinds of things, stop in the tavern at Houhora, the northernmost tavern in New Zealand.*

◆ Doubtless Bay

Doubtless Bay reputedly gets its name from Captain Cook, who said that it was "doubtless a bay." There are plenty of beaches and fishing spots and, if you like to wander around fishing villages, you'll love it here. Heading back down

around SH10 and the bottom of Doubtless Bay, you will reach Mangonui, a picturesque seaside fishing town that could just as easily be in Nova Scotia or Maine. You can use Mangonui as a base for exploring Cape Reinga and Ninety Mile Beach. On the way to Mangonui, you will pass through Cable Bay (once the terminus of a cable stretching from Queensland in Australia) and Coopers Beach (a popular holiday destination with shops).

Did you know? *Mangonui was the first whaling town in New Zealand.*

Information Sources

Check out www.doubtlessbay.co.nz.

The Visitor Information Centre is open daily, 9 am to 4 pm and is on the (only) main road, ☎/fax 09-406-2046.

The Bay of Islands

Including Kerikeri, Russell, Paihia, Opua, and 50 Islands, the Bay of Islands is a bit of a playground and gets the lion's share of Northland attention.

Kerikeri is a bit removed from it all, and filled with history and places to poke around. Russell is a delightful, romantic little town and was the first capital of New Zealand. Most people arrivein Russell by ferry, giving it a true holiday feel. It's the kind of town that you just wander around in, have a coffee or a wine, and then wander around some more. You can also go sailing, kayaking and fishing. Paihia is the town where most of the accommodation, bigger shops and a greater variety of activities are found.

Local produce: *The Bay of Islands, and particularly Kerikeri, is replete with farm stands. You can fill your entire car with fresh fruit and vegetables! Be sure to buy plenty of Kerikeri oranges.*

Northland was the site of the first permanent European settlements and where the Treaty of Waitangi – New Zealand's founding document – was drawn up and signed by Maori chiefs on February 6, 1840. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the area was settled and fought over by Maori tribes – the weather, the seafood and the safe harbors were all attractive then as they are now.

When Captain Cook made the rounds in 1769, he visited, anchored, and named the area. His experiences in the Bay of Islands were relatively good and without major incident. That was not the case for French explorer Marion du Fresne, who arrived in 1772 and, while originally getting on well with the locals, had a miscommunication that led to his own death and that of 26 crew members. The French retaliated, killing hundreds of Maori.

Once European settlement began in earnest, relations between Maori and pakeha fared well for a time and then began to break down, no doubt spurred on in part by the arrival of missionaries and European tools, including firearms. Not to say that the ways of the Maori warrior (including, let's face it, cannibalism) were ideal either.

Traditional Maori fighting was carried out during a "fighting season" – the time between hunting and growing crops; with the new fighting tools, the Maori took to warring on a more regular and much more destructive basis. In order to gain more firearms, Maori traded all that was valuable – food, greenstone and heads of chiefs taken in battle. It really is a gruesome story. European disease became prevalent, alcohol and tobacco were introduced and Maori women were prostituted to pakeha sailors. No surprise, the Maori lifestyle and culture began to fall apart.

When missionary Samuel Marsden showed up in 1814, he was intent on civilizing the Maori and saving the fallen pakeha. Following Marsden, Anglican, Catholic and Wesleyan missionaries all arrived and set up missions around the North Island.

◆ Kerikeri

Information Sources

The Department of Conservation office at the Kerikeri Basin Reserve can help you out with planning both short and long walks in the area, 34 Landing Road, ☎ 09-407-8474.

Sightseeing

Some 25 km (15 miles) northwest of Paihia, this is home to New Zealand's oldest building, the Kerikeri Mission House, known as the Kemp House (1822). Located in the Kerikeri Scenic Recreation Basin Reserve, the Mission Station (in which sits the house) was founded in 1819 by the Church Missionary Society; the Kororipo pa,

which was the fort of the Ngai Tawake war chief Hongi Hika, overlooks the station.

The Stone Store, built in 1832-1836, is beside the Kemp House, and is the oldest European stone building in New Zealand. It was meant to hold crops from the mission farm. Because of crop failure, that never happened; instead, it was used as a kauri gum trading store and then a general store.

Kerikeri Mission House

While in the Kerikeri Basin area, you can visit the Kororipo pa, or stronghold, and Rewa's Village – a replica of a pre-European Maori fishing village. At the Kerikeri Basin Reserve, there is a walkway along the Kerikeri River that in 15 minutes takes you to the site of Kerikeri's first hydroelectric plant, in 35 minutes to the Fairy Pools and in an hour to the Rainbow Falls.

Wineries

Marsden Estate, named for Samuel, is just outside of Kerikeri and is open for tastings Tuesday-Sunday. It's a good choice for brunch. www.marsdenestate.co.nz, Wiroa Road, ☎/fax 09-407-9398.

On SH10 is Cottle Hill Winery and it's owned by former sailors who came here and just didn't want to leave. They have a restaurant in addition to the tasting room and are open seven days a week. 10 am-6 pm summer, 10 am-5 pm winter. cottle-hill@xtra.co.nz, Cottle Hill Road, ☎ 09-407-5203 or fax 09-407-6808.

Where to Stay

The Summer House is an exquisite B&B with fabulous gardens and grounds. It's very nice and the breakfasts are works of art. www.thesummerhouse.co.nz, 424 Kerikeri Road, ☎ 09-407-4294, fax 09-407-4297 ($$$$).

The Abilene Motel is a centrally located, dependable motel with standard units. abilene@kerikeri-nz.co.nz, 136 Kerikeri Road, ☎ 09-407-9203 ($$-$$$).

Colonial House Motel has studios and one- and two-bedroom units. Set in a large garden. 178 Kerikeri Road, ☎ 09-407-9106 or 0800-242-555 ($$-$$$).

The Kerikeri YHA is close to town and set in a wooded area. There are dorms and doubles. 114 Kerikeri Road, ☎ 09-407-9391 ($).

Where to Eat

My favorite place to eat is the Café Cinema. Located, you guessed it, at the cinema. They have fresh and innovative food, a good wine list and yummy desserts. You can get a movie and meal deal. Hobson Ave, ☎ 09-407-9121 ($$).

For baked goodies, go to Kerikeri Bakehouse on Fairway Drive.

I've managed to have quite a few good breakfasts and lunches at the Fishbone Café. Good fresh food and pleasant staff (and good desserts). You can sit outside on a nice day. 88 Kerikeri Road, ☎ 09-407-6065 ($$).

◆ Paihia & Russell

Give yourself a half-hour to get from Kerikeri to Paihia. Two km (less than a mile) across the river from Paihia is Waitangi and the Treaty Grounds and, by ferry, Russell is just a few minutes away. I'll treat them together as far as activities go and list where to stay and eat at the end.

Information Sources

In Paihia, there is a very busy and informative Visitor Information Centre beside the Maritime Building. visitorinfo@fndc.govt.nz, ☎ 09-402-7345.

The Department of Conservation has an office in Russell, the Bay of Islands Maritime & Historic Park Visitor Centre, ☎ 09-403-9003, fax 09-403-9009. They have some great natural history displays and a very good gift shop.

Christ Church in Russell is the oldest church in New Zealand and still has bullet-hole scars from a rougher era. Pompallier is the oldest industrial building in New Zealand and was built as a print shop for the Roman Catholic mission. It has been restored. Staff (and visitors) can take part in the activities of the missionary days, including book-binding and working in the tannery. Open daily, at the end of The Strand.

Adventures

ON WATER

To miss getting on the water around here is to miss the soul of the place. Whether you take a scenic ride to the popular Hole in the Rock, or jump into the sea with the dolphins (which I promise will be unforgettable), make sure you get out there!

❖ WATCHABLE WILDLIFE

Dolphin Discoveries runs two trips a day, with pick-up points in Paihia and Russell. $95. dolphin@igrin.co.nz, corner Marsden & Williams roads, ☎ 09-402-8234, fax 09-402-6058.

Fullers also has dolphin swims as well as a whole menu of scenic boat trips. $95 adults, $48 children. www.fullers-bay-of-islands.co.nz, ☎ 09-402-7421 (Paihia), or 09-403-7866 (Russell).

Kings Dolphin Cruises & Tours offers a day-trip that includes a scenic ride to the Hole in the Rock, as well as a dolphin swim. They have outfitted their boat with a "boom net" allowing less confident swimmers to safely get in the water. $85 adults, $50 children. Departs at 10 am, lunch not included, but can be arranged. www.kingstours.co.nz, ☎ 09-402-8288, fax 09-402-7915.

Diving

Dive North operates daily dive trips to the Rainbow Warrior site from their base in Paihia. They also offer dive courses from beginner to divemaster level, as well as specialty courses like search-and-rescue and photography. www.bay-of-islands.co.nz/diving/divenorth.html, ☎ 09-402-7079.

Boating

There are a couple of different sailing options, depending on your interest. *Carino New Zealand* is a quick-moving, modern catamaran. Vanessa McKay is the skipper and has been sailing around the world nearly all her life. She supplies fishing and snorkeling gear, and the Carino has a DoC concession for dolphin swimming. A part of your daily fee goes

toward dolphin research. $69 adults, $35 children. carinonz@voyager.co.nz, ☎ 09-402-8040 or 025-933-872, fax 09-402-8661.

Take a sail on *Manawanui*, a 72-foot yacht. Ecocruz trips leave Paihia on Tuesday and Friday and return on Thursday and Sunday. There's kayaking, snorkeling, fishing, sailing, good food, all the things you do on a boat. Plus, it's a bargain. $450 per person (dorm accommodation), $525 per person (double) includes your activities, lodging and food – where else in the Bay of Islands is that going to happen? www.ecocruz.co.nz, ☎ 0800-432-6278 or 025-592-153.

Kayaking

There are a couple of different operators on the beach in Paihia that do trips around the bay and that rent out kayaks for you to enjoy on your own. My pick is Coastal Kayakers at the Waitangi end of the beach. They offer guided trips as well as rentals up the Waitangi River. The river is bordered by mangrove forest, which you can paddle through, depending on the tide. There are usually some great shore birds to check out. The trips also include a chance to play at Haruru Falls, a welcome cooling-off spot. Half-day, full-day and multi-day trips are available. Guided trips begin at $50 adults. www.coastalkayakers.co.nz, ☎ 09-402-8105 or 09-403-7951, fax 09-403-8550.

Fishing

Fishing around the Bay of Islands is for yellowtail, kingfish, kahawai, snapper, john dory, grouper, trevally and shark. There are more than a few different charters and guides available.

The word among locals is that you can't do better than Steve Butler on *Earl Grey* for a day's fishing. www.earlgreyfishing.co.nz, ☎ 09-407-7165, fax 09-407-5465.

Another option for the serious fisherman is *Major Tom II*. ☎ 025-377-844 or 0800-625-678.

Children are welcome on *Snappa*. Day-trips leave at 9 am and dusk trips leave at 4 pm. Adults $50, children $30. ☎ 09-402-7123.

ON FOOT

In Russell, pick up a copy of the *Heritage Trail* and take a self-guided tour focusing on Maori history, whaling and colonization. The three trails outlined take you all over the peninsula and range from one to three hours.

Cape Brett Walkway

The Cape Brett Walkway is the one "big" walk in this area. Cape Brett, or Rakaumangamanga, is the site where the first Maori landed in New Zealand in their seven *waka* (canoes). As it would happen, the peninsula also has seven peaks. At 16 km long (10 miles) it takes about eight hours, and takes in some fabulous scenery and terrain, ending (or beginning, depending on your point of view) at the DoC Cape Brett lighthouse hut. The hut was originally used for the lighthouse keepers and their families; it now sleeps 22. Book the hut through DoC in Russell, who can also advise on water taxi services (walk out and come back by boat). Contact details under information sources.

ON HORSES

Skyline Adventures offers different tours for novice or experienced riders; rides take you into the Waitangi Forest. From $40. skyline-adventures@xtra.co.nz. On Baylys Drive, Waitangi. ☎ 027-233-3490. From their base across from the airport, Skyline runs quad-bike rides. Prices begin at $60. 445 Puketona Road, ☎ 021-487-357.

More serious horseback riders should contact Big Rock Springs Trail Rides, which is about 45 minutes north of Paihia. Options include exploring glow-worm caves and swimming with your horse. Full-day $80, half-day (by arrangement) $55. ☎ 09-405-9999 or 09-401-9303.

IN THE AIR

Salt Air offers scenic tours around the Bay of Islands. There are some islands where you can land, and trips can be individualized for your needs and interests. These folks have both fixed-wing planes and helicop-

ters available; for the ultimate in Northland adventure, take the flight out to Cape Reinga, get picked up in a 4x4 for lighthouse and dune exploration, and then be whisked back to Paihia. Prices begin at $95. www.saltairco.nz, ☎ 09-402-8338 or 0800-472-5824, fax 09-402-8302.

IN CULTURE

The Waitangi Treaty Grounds is incredibly important to all New Zealanders. It's here that the Treaty of Waitangi was drawn up and signed. You enter the grounds through a visitor center where there are Treaty displays, an audio-visual gallery and a gift shop. More national heritage displays are in the Treaty House. The Whare Runanga, or Maori meeting house, and the Maori *waka*, or war canoe, *Ngatoki Matawhaorua*, are also on the grounds, as are walkways, a golf course and sports area.

The Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand's founding document, gave sovereignty of Aotearoa to Britain, while protecting Maori and guaranteeing their right over land and resources. The treaty was signed on February 6, 1840 by Captain William Hobson, acting for the British Crown, several British residents and approximately 45 Maori rangatira or chiefs – Hone Heke was the first.

You can do a self-tour or join a tour, which is a good opportunity to learn not only about Waitangi and the treaty grounds, but to gain some understanding of both the culture and history of New Zealand. Tours are very informal and guides are entertaining – open to answering whatever questions you may have.

In addition to guided tours, there are two cultural presentations. The daytime show is a more relaxed, casual affair with lots of singing and acting-out of stories. The performers are cheeky and silly. The evening show was specifically written for the Treaty Grounds and is a light, sound, and visual experience.

The Waitangi National Trust is open daily from 9 am to 5 pm in the winter, to 6 pm in the summer. Prices begin at $10 adult. Shows and tours are additional. www.waitangi.net.nz, ☎ 09-402-7437.

SPAS

A wonderful menu is offered at La Spa Naturale Day Spa. www.paihiabeach.co.nz, Paihia Beach Resort & Spa, 116 Marsden Road, ☎ 09-402-6140 or 0800-870-111, fax 09-402-6026.

Where to Stay

PAIHIA

La Veduta is a good choice for homestay. The owners are French and Italian who make food and guests a part of their life. Dinner available by prior arrangement. www.laveduta.co.nz, corner of Gould and Hazard streets, ☎/fax 09-403-8299 ($$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Per room, double occupancy	
$	under NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$101-$175
$$$$	over NZ$175

The Edelweiss Motel is a good, dependable motel with reasonable rates. There are different size units depending on need (all with full kitchen) and a heated saltwater swimming pool. www.edelweissmotel.co.nz, 70 Seaview Road, ☎ 09-402-7982, fax 09-402-6023 ($$-$$$).

Paihia Beach Resort & Spa is the only real "resort" kind of place – big, heated salt-water swimming pool, day-spa, poolside restaurant, but, with only 21 suites, it's not overwhelming. www.paihiabeach.co.nz, 116 Marsden Road, ☎ 09-402-6140 or 0800-870-111 (in the US/CAN 1-888-226-7448), fax 09-402-6026 ($$$$).

You can choose from studios with kitchen and bath, one- and two-bedroom suites, or B&B at Admirals View Lodge. It's a block off the beach and was just opened in late 2002, so things are new and modern. Free bikes. www.admiralsviewlodge.co.nz. 2 Murray Road, ☎ 09-402-6236 or 0800-247-234, fax 09-402-6237 ($$-$$$).

Built as a backpacker hostel is Peppertree Lodge. They have a big kitchen and a large lounge, as well as big courtyard. Bikes and kayaks are available for guest use free. www.peppertree.co.nz, 15 Kings Road, ☎/fax 09-402-6122 ($).

Saltwater Lodge is a very nice backpacker accommodation and each room has its own bathroom. Twin, king and dorm rooms are available. Free bikes and kayaks. www.saltwaterlodge.co.nz, 14 Kings Road, ☎ 09-402-7075 or 0800-002-266, fax 09-402-7240 ($).

RUSSELL

The Duke of Marlborough Hotel is home to the oldest pub in New Zealand and in 2003 all of the guest rooms were renovated. On the

Waterfront, www.theduke.co.nz, ☎ 09-403-7829, fax 09-403-7828 ($$$).

For those who want to tie a little fishing into their stay, Te Manaaki is the choice. The owner has a charter boat and is a keen fisherman. Robertson Street, ☎ 09-403-7200 ($$$).

Triton Suites is a totally revamped 70s-style place. It's a motel, but the suites have nice furnishings that set it apart. www.tritonsuites.co.nz, 7 Wellington Street, ☎/fax 09-403-8067 ($$$).

For the reasonably priced option, pick Kororareka Backpackers. It's a big house on the hill, with fabulous views and very social hosts. Oneroa Road, ☎ 09-403-8494 ($).

Russell Top 10 Holiday Park has a bit of everything, from tent sites to cabins. It's clean, friendly and modern. www.russelltop10.co.nz, Long Beach Road, ☎ 09-403-7826 or 0800-503-889, fax 09-403-7221 ($-$$)

Where to Eat

PAIHIA

Tides is another of my favorites. I've been for breakfast and lunch and it's always good. Williams Street, ☎ 09-402-7557 ($$-$$$).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée	
$	under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$21-$30
$$$$	over NZ$30

Pizzeria La Scaletta is dependable for gourmet pizza and other Italian options. Selwyn Road, ☎ 09-402-7039 ($$-$$$).

Only Seafood is the place to go if everyone wants, you guessed it, seafood. Upstairs at 40 Marsden Road, ☎ 09-402-6666. Downstairs at the same address is Bistro 40, with a broader menu, but just as good food (and they make tiramisu). ☎ 09-402-7444 ($$$).

At the Treaty Grounds is Waikokopu Café, which has the best café food in town. It's all good and the surroundings are lovely. ☎ 09-402-6275.

Author's choice: *Pure Tastes at the Paihia Beach Resort and Spa has superb food and a gorgeous location. Simply the best in town. ☎ 09-402-0003. ($$-$$$$).*

RUSSELL

The Gables is in an historic (c. 1847) building on the waterfront. Features all the food you'd expect in such elegant surroundings, served on white linen. The Strand, ☎ 09-403-7618 ($$$$).

The Duke of Marlborough Tavern is the place for pub food. ☎ 09-403-7829 ($-$$).

The Bordello Garden Bistro has breakfast, snacks and light meals all day. The Strand, ☎ 09-403-7618 ($$).

◆ On the Road to Tutukaka

Leaving Paihia, you don't have to travel far to Opua, where the vehicle ferry leaves for Russell. Opua is a deep-water port and popular with the yachties. Farther along is Kawakawa, where a quick side-trip will take you to the famous artwork called the Hundertwasser toilets, above. They are spectacular.

But, continuing south on SH1, you'll reach Waiomio and the Kawiti Glow-worm Caves. These are definitely worth a stop. No big lines here to get in, it's a simple exploration of the caves on private land. Guided tours only (30 to 40 minutes). $10 adults, $5 children. 5 km south of Kawakawa, 1 km from SH1 at Waiomio. Probably best to phone first, or if you stop by unannounced, you may need to hang out for a few minutes until a guide returns. ☎ 09-404-0583 or 09-404-1256.

◆ Tutukaka

As you drive south on SH1 from Waiomio, I suggest you head toward the coast when you reach Hikurangi and follow the road to Matapouri and then Tutukaka. This is an interesting piece of the coast that most international travelers don't explore.

Dive! Tutukaka is based at the edge of the Tutukaka Harbour and, with Poor Knights Islands (a marine reserve 28 km/23 miles offshore that has been called the world's best subtropical dive site) and two specially sunk ships, it makes a great dive. In addition to dive trips,

these folks are happy to take snorkelers and kayakers along, and can supply all the gear you need. Prices begin at $65 for snorkelers, $185 for diving. www.diving.co.nz, ☎ 09-434-3867 or 0800-288-882, fax 09-434-3884.

Ngunguru is a few km south of Tutukaka. When the Europeans first arrived in Ngunguru, the local Maori welcomed them and gave them land on which to build a school. Today, it is a popular swimming and waterskiing area, and kayaks are available to paddle around the estuary.

◆ Whangarei

Whangarei is Northland's major city and the next major town you'll come to on your way to Auckland. While Whangarei is a nice town, and a popular place for international cruising sailors, if you're tight on time, you'd probably be wise to carry on.

Information Sources

Tip: *For more information on Whangarei and the surroundng area, check www.whangareinz.org.nz..*

The Whangarei Information & Travel Centre is very helpful and well-equipped. They even have a café. 92 Otaika Road, ☎ 09-438-1079. The Department of Conservation is in the same building and can be contacted at ☎ 09-430-2007.

◆ Whangarei to Warkworth

Leaving Whangarei, I suggest you take the scenic coastal route, which follows SH1 to Waipu. In 30 minutes, you'll be at Bream Bay and the small settlement of Ruakaka, with a long, sandy beach perfect for sunbathing and swimming. It's a very popular surf spot, too, and there are more than a couple of shellfish living in the water. Right along the water is the Ruakaka Racecourse.

Waipu is a proudly Scottish settlement with the usual restaurants and fast food shops, continuing south you'll go through Langs Beach and the Mangawhai Heads, Pakiri, and Matakana to Warkworth. I much prefer the coast drive, although the inland route (staying on SH1) does wind through some beautiful bush.

Information Sources

Check out the Information Center in Warkworth, service@warkworth.co.nz, 1 Baxter Street, ☎ 09-425-9081.

ADVENTURES WITH WINE & FOOD

From Matakana to Warkworth, there are a handful of very good and well-respected wineries to visit. Traditionally, the mostly hillside vineyards were planted in reds – Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinotage, Pinot Noir and Sangiovese; now, however, Chardonnay and Pinot Gris are making a stand.

My Favorite Wineries

The buildings at Ascension Vineyard & Café were inspired by the Spanish Mission at San Luis Obispo, California. It's a small producing winery and the wines aren't widely available, so a trip to the tasting room and café is an opportunity to try something new. The café is Mediterranean in flavor and open daily for lunch, dinner on Thursday to Saturday. The tasting room is open daily. 480 Matakana Road, ☎ 09-422-9601.

I've always liked Heron's Flight. The café uses fresh ingredients for simple platters and salads and provides a relaxing sunny spot to try wine and food. They make olive oil and preserves, and also conduct garden tours. 49 Sharps Road, ☎ 09-422-7915.

Shopping

The Original Sheep World is in Warkworth and is a big woolly attraction – see sheep dogs work, take some time in the animal farmyard, go to the sheepskin and sweater shop. You can try sheep shearing, wool spinning and carding. Open daily, 9 am to 5 pm.

$10 adults, $5 children. Main Highway, 4 km north of Warkworth, ☎ 09-425-7444.

Where to Stay

MANGAWHAI

Milestone Cottages by the Sea is definitely the place to be. The darling cottages with kitchen and bath are sprinkled around five acres of bush and provide easy access to beaches and a wildlife sanctuary. There is a swimming pool and kayaks. milestone.cottages@clear.net.nz, 27 Moir Point Road, Mangawhai Heads, ☎/fax 09-431-4018 ($$$).

Another great option is Mangawhai Lodge, a boutique B&B with fantastic sea views and a great wrap-around porch. The five rooms all have bathrooms. www.seaviewlodge.co.nz, 41 Heather Street, Mangawhai, ☎ 09-431-5311 ($$$).

The Leigh Sawmill Café and Accommodation is one of those funky places to grab a bite to eat or hang out at night for the live music. This is definitely a relaxed place and it's easy enough to spend a few hours drinking local wine and eating fresh seafood. www.sawmillcafe.co.nz, 142 Pakiri Road. Leigh. ☎ 09-422-6019 ($$).

Waikato

Introduction

The Waikato area, on the Central West Coast, is often bypassed by visitors. But there are many points of interest here, including Hamilton, the center of the region and the fifth-largest city in New Zealand.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Getting Here 109
- Information Sources 110
- Hamilton 110
- All Around Hamilton 111
- Waitomo 115

Getting Here

◆ By Air

The Hamilton International Airport is about 15 km (nine miles) south of Hamilton. Air New Zealand, www.airnewzealand.co.nz, ☎ 07-857-1027, and Origin Pacific, www.originpacific.co.nz, ☎ 0800-302-302, operate domestically and Freedom Air, www.freedomair.com, ☎ 0800-600-500, based in Hamilton, has direct flights to destinations around Australia.

◆ By Car

Hamilton lies at the intersection of SH1 and SH3. From Auckland (SH1) to Hamilton, the drive takes about 1½ hours; it's an hour from Rotorua (SH5 and SH1) or from Waitomo (SH3), and nearly two hours from Taupo (SH1).

The drive along SH1 takes just 1½ hours, but there are a couple of interesting stops along the way. In Huntly, about 95 km (59 miles) south of Auckland, you can't help but notice New Zealand's largest power station. You can pay a visit to the Waikato Coalfield's Museum and learn how the coal turns into power, 26 Harlock Place, ☎ 07-828-8128. Continuing south, you will reach Ngaruawahia, an historically

important place to the local Maori and the home of the region's Maori Queen.

◆ By Bus

Hamilton is well served by InterCity Coachlines; they come and go from the Travel Centre at the corner of Bryce and Anglesea Streets. InterCity has routes around the region. Bookings can be made at the information center or through InterCity directly. www.intercitycoach.co.nz, ☎ 09-913-6100.

Information Sources

Tourism Waikato maintains www.waikatonz.com, the official website of the region.

The Department of Conservation is located at 18 London Street, Hamilton, ☎ 07-839-1393.

Hamilton

The service center of the central region, Hamilton is the largest inland city in New Zealand and is the fifth largest city overall. This area is rich in agriculture, but is seeing a shift away from primary production as people and businesses escape the 'bigness' of Auckland and find their way to the area, many of the local farmers have packed up their dairy cows and moved to the bottom of the South Island.

◆ Tourist Information

The Visitor Information Centre is in the Transport Centre Building at the corner of Anglesea and Bryce Streets, open daily, hamiltoninfo@wave.co.nz, ☎ 07-839-3580, fax 07-839-3127.

The Hamilton Gardens have herb, Renaissance, Japanese, and other types of plantings. Open daily, 10 am to 4 pm. www.hamiltongardens.co.nz, bordering the river and alongside Cobham Drive SH1, ☎ 07-856-3200 or 838-6897.

◆ Where to Stay

The biggest and the newest place to stay is Novotel Tainui Hamilton, complete with a gym, spa, sauna and restaurant. www.novotel.co.nz, Alma Street, ☎ 07-838-1366 or 0800-450-050, fax 07-838-1367 ($$$).

Kingsgate Hotel has a tidal flow pool, three spa pools, sauna, two steam rooms and a gym, as well as accommodation. www.kingsgatehamilton.co.nz, 100 Garnett Avenue, ☎ 07-849-0860, fax 07-849-0660 ($$$).

◆ Where to Eat

Along Victoria Avenue, you can find cafés, restaurants, take aways, gourmet burgers, Indian, kebabs, you name it.

Metropolis would be top of the heap for veggie and other options, including coffee. 211 Victoria Street ($$).

The Bank Bar and Brasserie is in an old bank and has reasonably priced meals and snacks. Corner Hood and Victoria ($-$$).

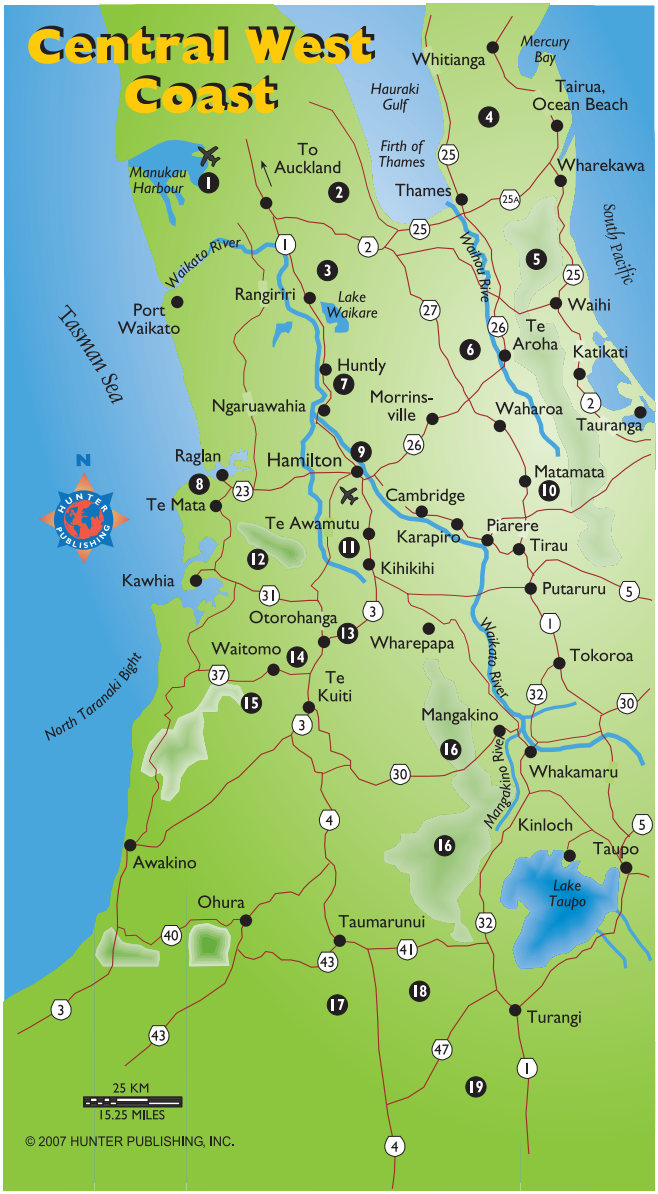
All Around Hamilton

Just a few minutes east of Hamilton on SH1 is Cambridge, the bluegrass area of New Zealand. This is where the horses come from and it's a lovely, quaint little village to stay in. Continuing east on SH1 is Karapiro and its lake, popular for kayaking and waterskiing. And a short distance farther along, you'll get to the intersection of SH27 and Tirau. Head up SH27 and you'll find yourself in Matamata. From there, SH27 curves around to the west and joins SH26, which heads north to Te Aroha and the Coromandel Peninsula. Tokoroa is midway between Tirau and Taupo on SH1. Heading south from Hamilton on SH3, you will reach Te Awamutu, Kihikihi, Wharepapa and Mangakino.

◆ Information Sources

The Cambridge Visitor Information Centre is on Queen Street, ☎ 07-823-3456, fax 07-823-3457.

It's hard to miss the Tirau Visitor Information Centre in "The Big Dog" right on Main Street. The dog is made of corrugated metal, and


Central West Coast
Whitianga
Mercury Bay
Hauraki Gulf
Tairua, Ocean Beach
To Auckland
Firth of Thames
Manukau Harbour
Thames
Wharekawa
South Pacific
Waikato River
Waihou River
Rangiriri
Lake Waikare
Waihi
Port Waikato
Tasman Sea
Te Aroha
Katikati
Huntly
Ngaruawahia
Morrinsville
Waharoa
Tauranga
Raglan
Hamilton
Matamata
Te Mata
Cambridge
Te Awamutu
Karapiro
Piarere
Tirau
Kawhia
Kihikihi
Putaruru
Otorohanga
Waitomo
Wharepapa
Tokoroa
North Taranaki Bight
Te Kuiti
Mangakino
Waikato River
Whakamaru
Mangakino Dam
Kinloch
Taupo
Awakino
Lake Taupo
Ohura
Taumarunui
Turangi
25 KM
15.25 MILES
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Lost World Abseil, Waitomo, Waikato

1. Auckland International Airport
2. Hunua Range Regional Park & Mangatawhiri Forest Park
3. Whangamarino Wetland Reserve, Rangiriri *Pa*
4. Coromandel Peninsula
5. Coromandel Range
6. Hot Springs, Cadman House Museum
7. Waikato Coalfields Museum
8. Raglan Surf School, Magic Mountain Farm Lodge, Waingaro Hot Springs
9. Waikato Museum of Art & History, Hamilton Gardens, Woodlands Historic House & Gardens, Sky Riverside Casino, Hamilton International Airport
10. "Hobbiton" village set
11. Castle Rock, Te Awamutu Maori Museum
12. Pirongia Forest Park & Mountain, Bridal Veil Falls
13. Otorohanga Kiwi House & Bird Sanctuary
14. Glow-worm Caves, Billy Black's Kiwi Culture Show, Altura Gardens & Wildlife Park
15. Whareorino & Manganui Forests
16. Pureora Forest
17. Whanganui National Park
18. Tongariro Forest Conservation Area
19. Tongariro National Park, Tukino Ski Area, Crater Lake, Mt. Ruahepu, Mt. Ngauruhoe, Mt. Tongariro

it's right between the Church of the Good Shepherd, also corrugated, and the Big Sheep. thedogtirau@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 07-883-1202.

Information Matamata is at 45 Broadway, ☎ 07-888-7260, fax 07-888-5653.

Te Aroha Information Centre is at 102 Whitaker Street, ☎ 07-884-8052, fax 07-884-8259.

The Tokoroa Visitor Information Centre is on SH1, ☎ 07-886-8872, fax 07-886-6501.

In Te Awamutu, the visitor center is at the corner of Gorst Avenue and Arawata Street. www.teawamutu.co.nz, ☎ 07-871-3259.

◆ Adventures

On Water

For a really relaxing and enjoyable trip, rent a kayak from The Boatshed Café & Kayaks and go for a paddle around on Waikato River. In just a few minutes, you'll be paddling in a tucked-away little cove amid old-growth trees, on your way to a waterfall. Rentals start at $15 for three hours. www.theboatshed.net.nz, Amber Lane, by Lake Karapiro, ☎ 07-827-8286 or 027-275-8724, fax 07-827-8266.

◆ Sightseeing

Hobbiton, the Hobbit village from *The Lord of the Rings*, is near the town of Matamata. You can tour the rolling green farm movie set with Rings Scenic Tours, 45 Broadway, Matamata, ☎ 07-888-6838, fax 07-888-5653. Find out more at www.hobbitontours.com.

Visit Te Awamutu Museum for good displays of Maori taonga (treasures) from the region. Free admission. Open daily, 10 am to 4 pm; 1 pm on weekends. At the Civic Centre.

◆ Where to Stay

Captains Quarters Motor Inn is a small, comfortable motel. It's just off SH1, but in a quiet spot. 57A Hamilton Road, Cambridge, ☎ 07-827-8989 fax 07-827-8985 ($$).

Cambridge Motor Park has all the usual facilities and range of accommodation and is in a park-like area. 32 Scott Street, Cambridge, ☎/fax 07-827-5649 ($-$$).

In Te Awamutu, treat yourself to Out in the Styx Café and Guest House. Gorgeous, gorgeous, gorgeous. With fabulous green hills as the view, good food to eat and accommodation in bunkrooms or rooms with bath, this is a real find. It offers dinner, bed and breakfast and you can even take cooking lessons here. www.styx.co.nz, 2117 Arapuni Road, ☎ 07-872-4505 or 0800-461-559, fax 07-872-4505 ($$-$$$).

◆ Where to Eat

The Boatshed Café and Kayaks is the choice for a chill-out spot with great food to grab a book or magazine, sit in the sun, eat and read. www.theboatshed.net.nz, Amber Lane, ☎ 07-827-8286 or 027-275-8724, fax 07-827-8266 ($-$$).

Waitomo

The underground world of Waitomo is the most famous area of the Waikato, where it's all about glow-worms and blackwater rafting.

About Those Glow-Worms

Found all over New Zealand, they're not worms at all! They are the larval stage of the fungus gnat, which is a relative of the mosquito. They attach themselves to cave roofs (or overhangs) and produce a 20 to 30 long mucus-and-silk threads that resemble fishing line in look and function. They hang down a few centimeters or inches and these larvae have luminescent organs that emit a greenish-yellow light. Flying insects and midges are attracted to the light, get caught in the threads, and the gnat eats them. This is the only time in the life of the gnat when it eats. As an adult, it has no mouth parts and only lives for a couple of days, frantically trying to find a mate.

◆ Getting Here

Waitomo is toward the coast on SH37, just about five minutes from the SH3 intersection. From Rotorua, it's two hours; from Auckland, 2½ hours; and from Hamilton, one hour.

Waitomo Wanderer runs daily round-trip shuttles from Rotorua. They leave Rotorua at 7:30 am, arriving at Waitomo at 9:30 am. Depart Waitomo at 4 pm, arriving at Rotorua at 6 pm. ☎ 07-349-2509.

◆ Information

The friendly and helpful Information Center is located right in the middle of Waitomo township. ☎ 07-878-7640, fax 07-878-6184.

◆ Adventures

In Caves

Cathedral, Waitomo Caves

Blackwater rafting is not whitewater rafting in a cave. While a couple of trips are in rafts, most likely you'll be decked out in a wetsuit, helmet and boots, given an inner tube that fits over your bum, and then coached in the art of jumping backwards into the water, landing seated on your tube. There are moments of thrill, but it's not terrifying, and a good belly laugh is almost a guarantee. Minimum age is 12 for the tubing trips, and booking is essential during summer. All of the companies provide water gear (but bring a swimsuit and towel) and hot showers at the end of the trip. Most provide a light meal or snack.

Blackwater Raft Trips

The legendary Black Water Rafting Co. has three trips – two are in inner tubes, one in a raft – that last from three to five hours. Prices range from $37 to $145. www.blackwaterrafting.co.nz, Waitomo Caves Road, ☎ 07-878-6219 or 0800-228-464, fax 07-878-5190.

Waitomo Adventures Ltd. offers five trips through rivers and caves, with prices from $85 to $355. www.waitomo.co.nz. ☎ 07-878-7788 or 0800-924-866.

Waitomo Wilderness Tours calls it Rap, Raft 'n' Rock – a four- to five-hour abseil/tubing/climbing trip. They also offer cave canoeing. Prices start at $85 per person. www.caveraft.com, ☎ 0800-228-372.

With Glow-Worms

The Waitomo Glow-Worm Caves have guided tours of the limestone caves by boat. This is the least adventurous way to see the glow-worms, but you probably see more – the caves are enormous and the ceiling is covered with the things. Tours depart every half-hour from 9 am to 5 pm. You can also visit the Aranui Cave (no glow-worms, but great cave structures) for a guided walking tour. Combination tickets are available. For one admission: $25 adults, $12 children. Under five free. For both cave and boat trip: $45 adults, $22.50 children. www.waitomocaves.co.nz, Waitomo Caves Road, ☎ 07-878-8227 or 0800-456-922, fax 07-878-8858.

For those who want to read about and understand why the caves are here, go to the Waitomo Museum of Caves, located at the information center. Kids will enjoy crawling around and there are interactive displays and audio-visual programs. www.waitomo-museum.co.nz, Waitomo Caves Road, ☎ 07-878-7640, fax 07-878-6184.

On the Farm

Billy Black's Kiwi Culture Show is an audience participation event that traces the history of New Zealand in a goofy and entertaining way. Plenty of animals file in and out of the monstrous barn and there's lots of memorabilia to keep you occupied before and after the show. You can try the Drive Yourself Jet-Boats – it's the only place in NZ where you can! If you need a place to stay, consider the 1950s Rail Car or "one of the last allied planes to fly out of Viet Nam." Both have been converted to motel rooms. www.woodlynpark.co.nz, 1177 Waitomo Valley Road, ☎ 07-878-6666, fax 07-878-8866.

If you've had enough of water- and cave-based activities, book with Waitomo Big Red for a farm-based quad-bike tour. Book at the information center or call ☎ 07-878-8393.

◆ Where to Stay

Waitomo Big Bird B&B is set on an ostrich farm. Rooms with kitchen as well as bed and breakfast accommodation in the house are available. www.waitomobigbird.co.nz, right near the junction of SH3

and SH37, 17 Waitomo Caves Road, ☎ 07-873-7459 or 0800-733-244 ($$).

Abseil Breakfast Inn is gorgeous, with four huge rooms, modern décor and fabulous views of the area. You get a big cooked breakfast, too. www.abseilinn.co.nz, 709 Waitomo Caves Road, ☎ 07-878-7815 ($$$).

The YHA in Waitomo is modern, clean and has a ski-resort feel. While housing countless beds, it feels more like a neighborhood than a massive hostel. The "dorms" are in four-bed chalets, each with ensuite bathrooms, and there are also singles and doubles available. www.kiwipaka-yha.co.nz, School Road, ☎ 07-878-3395 fax 07-878-3396 ($).

The Waitomo Top 10 Holiday Park is new, tidy and right in the village. Accommodation options include motels, rooms with kitchen and bath, backpacker hostel and standard cabins. There's nothing particularly fancy about the location, but everything you need is there. www.waitomopark.co.nz, Waitomo Caves Road, ☎/fax 07-878-7639 ($-$$).

◆ Where to Eat

Morepork Pizzeria and Café is located at the YHA and has tasty café food with plenty of vegetarian options, as well as pastas and pizza. Good coffee and baked things; they're open in the evenings for dinner. School Road, ☎ 07-878-3395 ($-$$).

The Long Black Café at the Legendary Black Water Rafting Co. base, has fabulous salads, wraps and breakfast options, not to mention good coffee. Waitomo Caves Road, ☎ 07-878-7361 ($).

You owe it to yourself to stop at The BIG Apple Café, Restaurant and Orchards. The giant red apple outside has become a New Zealand icon and it's a good spot for a snack or coffee. SH3, 9 km from Waitomo Caves, ☎ 07-873-8753.

Rotorua
Introduction

This area has the most geothermal activity in New Zealand. Reminders that you are in a volcanic zone are everywhere – from bubbling mud pots and exploding geysers to mineral baths and active volcanoes. It has been a spa destination for years and the allure of its health benefits keeps getting stronger. It has a year-round population of 76,000 and is the most popular vacation destination on the North Island.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Getting Here 119
- Information Sources 120
- Adventures 120
- Sightseeing 131
- Where to Stay 132
- Where to Eat 134

Rotorua is the heartland of Maori culture. It was the Te Arawa Maori, arriving in New Zealand from Hawaiki on the Arawa canoe in the mid-14th century, who first settled Rotorua. They began receiving visitors as early as the 19th century, when people came to see the pink and white terraces – the "eighth wonder of the world"– making them New Zealand's first tourist destination.

In 1886, Mt. Tarawera erupted with such force that the local village of Te Wairoa was destroyed under hot ash. Along with destroying the village, the eruption killed more than 150 people and destroyed the famous pink and white terraces. This was the most recent of numerous major volcanic events in the Rotorua area. Scientists say that the next significant volcanic activity in the area will come from Makatiti Dome and it will be 30-40 times greater than Mt. Tarawera.

Warning: Beware of amoebic meningitis! When you bathe or soak in thermal springs, pools or rivers, do not put your head under the water!

Getting Here

◆ By Air

Rotorua has daily air service between Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. The airport is a 15-minute drive from the city.

◆ By Car

It seems that all roads lead to Rotorua, which is one-hour from Tauranga via SH2, from Hamilton via SH1 and SH5, and from Taupo via SH5 or SH1 and SH30. It takes about three hours from Auckland via SH1 and Hamilton, and five hours from Wellington, via SH1 through Taupo.

◆ By Bus

All major bus lines and tour buses service Rotorua with connections throughout the North Island. Buses arrive and depart from Tourism Rotorua, 1167 Fenton Street. InterCity buses can be booked through the information center, on-line or directly in Wellington at ☎ 04-472-5111 or in Auckland at ☎ 09-913-6100. Guthreys bus service can be contacted at ☎ 09-302-2645.

Information Sources

The official Rotorua website is www.rotoruanz.com.

The very helpful, spacious and well-stocked Visitor Information Centre is open daily from 8 am to 5:30 pm in the winter, 8 am to 6 pm in the summer. Contact them at info@tourism.rdc.govt.nz. The office is located at 1167 Fenton Street, ☎ 07-348-5179 or 0800-768-678, fax 07-348-6044.Hours are 8 am-5:30 pm.

Adventures

◆ In Maori Culture

Tamaki Experience is the most glitzy of the shows, but it's still is fun. As with the other shows, you'll be picked up at your accommodation in a bus, or waka, and transported as if you were part of a tribe to the site. Along the way, you'll practice a song and elect a chief. It's all good fun, and very entertaining. At the show grounds there is a tribal market that is open daily from 9 am to 4:30 pm, where craftspeople work and sell their art. SH5, 15 minutes out of Rotorua. The booking office for the Tamaki Experience is in central Rotorua and you can buy souvenirs and gifts here, as well as visit an orchid garden.There

are usually two shows nightly, but check the schedule in advance. $75 adults, $35 children. www.maoriculture.co.nz, ☎ 07-346-2823.

Whakarewarewa Thermal Valley and Reserve is a natural geothermal field with bubbling mud pools, steaming mineral springs and erupting geysers, two of which are among New Zealand's most famous – Pohutu (can go as high as 30 meters/98 feet) and Prince of Wales Feathers. It is right at the edge of town, making it a convenient stop.

Whakarewarewa Thermal Village is located in the Whakarewarewa Thermal Valley and Reserve and has been home to the people of the Tuhourangi/Ngati Wahiao since 1710. This is the village where survivors from Te Wairoa village were invited to live after the June 1886 volcanic eruption. It is a living Maori village; all the guides are descendants of the survivors of the Tarawera eruption and share their history and lifestyle, including explaining their cooking and bathing areas.

Admission to the village includes a guided walk (lasts about an hour) and twice-daily concerts. Lunch is also available for an additional price, or you can just have a piece of sweet corn steamed in the ground, or buy something more substantial at the café. There is a gift shop and some of the locals have begun to operate craft stalls from their homes. After the guided tour and concert, you can take to the paths and wander around the property (trails up the hill give good views of the area). There are some great vantage points for watching the geysers. Admission $18 adults, $9 children; hangi buffet combo, $35 adults, $30 children. www.whakarewarewa.com, entrance at the end of Tryon Street. ☎/fax 07-349-3463 or 0800-924-426.

Also in the Whakarewarewa Thermal Valley and Reserve is The New Zealand Maori Arts & Crafts Institute. It was created in 1963 by an act of Parliament as a way to keep the art of Maori carving alive. Also on the property is a pa, or fortified village, a meeting house, a nocturnal house (where you can view kiwi birds) and bush walks to vantage points for viewing the geysers and mud pools. You can take a guided walk or go on your own. Included in your admission price is a midday Maori concert. *Mia Ora* is the evening show here and audience size is limited to just over 100 peo-

Rotorua
Katikati
Tauranga Harbour
Mt. Maunganui
Motiti Island
Bay of Plenty
Tauranga
Matamata
Te Puke
Kaimai Mamaku Forest Park
Kaituna River
Lakes Rotoiti, Rotoehu & Rotoma
Whakatane
Te Urewera National Park
Taneatua
Opotiki
Putaruru
Lake Rotorua
Waikato River
Rotorua
Tarawera Riv
Mt Tarawera
Tokoroa
Lake Rotomahana
Upper Atiamuri
Tarawera Forest
Rangitaiki River
25KM
15 MILES
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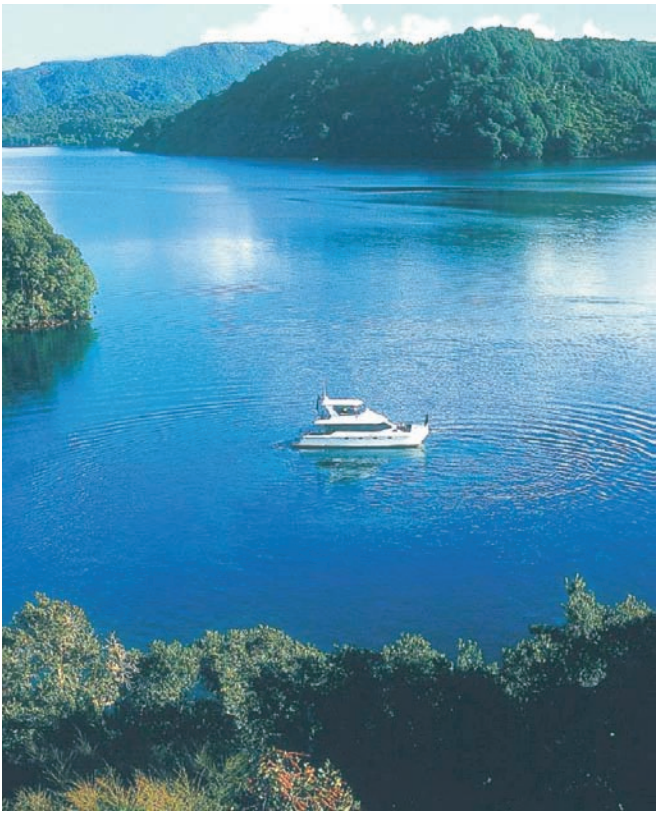
1. Rotorua City, Whakarewarewa Thermal Valley Reserve & Village, Pohutu & Prince of Wales Feathers geysers, New Zealand Maori Arts & Crafts Institute, Rotorua Museum of Art & History, Polynesian Spa, Queen Elizabeth Spa, Blue Baths
2. Rainbow Springs, Skyline-Skyrides at The Redwoods, Agrodome
3. Rotorua Airport, 3D Maze
4. Hell's Gate Geothermal Reserve, Wai Ora Spa
5. Rotiti Tours, World of Maori, Tamaki Experience
6. Tarawera Falls
7. Blue Lake (Tikitapu), Green Lake (Rotokakahi), Te Wairoa (buried village)
8. Site of Pink & White Terraces
9. Waimangu Thermal Reserve
10. Wai-O-Tapu Geyser, Waikite Valley Thermal Pools



Lake Tarawera

ple, making it one of the smaller, more intimate evening shows. In addition to traditional hangi, or Maori buffet, there is a large selection of seafood and other non-smoked dishes. $19.95 adults, $9.95 children (ages five-15) $3.50 (ages four-five); evening show and meal $70 adults, $40 children (ages five-15). Open 8 am to 6 pm (5 pm in winter). Evening shows begin at 6:15 pm in the summer, 5:15 in winter. Make sure you book in advance! www.nzmaori.co.nz, Hemo Road, ☎ 07-348-9047.

On the banks of Lake Rotoiti, is the marae, or meeting place, of Ngati Rongomai, where Rotoiti Tours, World of Maori puts on cultural performances and hangi buffets. Total group size is limited to just

over 100, so this too is a smaller, more intimate experience in an authentic and beautiful location. rotoiti.tours@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 07-348-8969.

Did you know? *Hangi refers to the traditional Maori meal preparation and feast. Food is slow-cooked in the ground and served buffet-style.*

◆ Thermal Reserves

Inside advice: *As with the cultural nights, each thermal reserve has its special character. Your choice will depend on what you want to experience or see.*

For a free experience, head to Kuirau Park, right in town. There are walking paths and bubbling mud pools. You can wander around as long as you like. Access on Kuirau Street.

Helpful hint: *The steam from the reserves turned my silver rings black. They cleaned up fine, but you might want to leave your jewelry somewhere else.*

If you've never seen a geyser, then Wai-O-Tapu is a good bet, as the Lady Knox geyser erupts at 10:15 am every day. How do they know that? They prompt her by adding detergent. Wai-O-Tapu has the most colorful pools and has the most extensive walking tracks – the longest loop is about 75 minutes, the shortest 30. The pools are beautiful, the colors quite spectacular. The Champagne Pool is the largest in the area (65 meters/213 feet in diameter) and especially colorful. One thing to keep in mind when visiting Wai-O-Tapu is that most of those who gather to see the eruption of Lady Knox will then go on a loop walk. So, if you don't want to be in a crowd, leave after you snap your photo and start the walk ahead of the huge throng. Open daily from 8:30 am

to 5 pm (last admission is at 3:45). $18.50 adults, $6 children. Take SH5 toward Taupo for 27 km (17 miles). Turn left at the Waiotapu Tavern. ☎ 07-366-6333, fax 07-366-6010, www.geyserland.co.nz.

A **"fumerole"** *is an opening in the ground from which steam and volcanic gasses escape. The hissing and roaring sound that you hear is from the pressurized steam escaping through cracks.*

Of all the thermal reserves in the region, Waimangu is my choice for a peaceful, natural experience. From the visitor center, the walking path leads downhill to the valley and you have a choice of three places to catch a shuttle bus back to the top. Even the shortest walk offers a lot to see; the bush is lovely and a very detailed guide is provided. Refer to *Adventures on Water*, page 127, for their boat-trip options. Open daily from 8:30 am, last admission at 3:45 pm (4:45 in January). Take SH5 toward Taupo for 14 km (nine miles), turn left on Waimangu Road and drive six km (3¾ miles). ☎ 07-366-6137, fax 07-366-6607, www.waimangu.com.

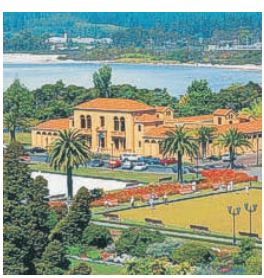
Steaming cliffs, Waimangu

Instead of colorful pools, Hell's Gate Geothermal Reserve has mud. And lots of it. It's the most active thermal park, meaning that things are brewing pretty rapidly and the water doesn't have time to sit in pools and absorb the colors of the minerals. There are signposted trails and a self-guide map. This is the only thermal park that is Maori-owned and -operated; it's only been operating since 2001. Associated with the reserve is Wai Ora Spa, which makes good use of all the mud (refer to spa listings below for details). 9 am to 8:30 pm daily. $16 adults, $8 children. SH30, about 20 minutes from the city center. ☎ 07-345-3151, fax 07-345-6481, www.hellsgate.co.nz.

◆ Spas

Did you know? *Spa therapies have been going on in Rotorua since 1910.*

If you like soaking in thermal water or having a spa treatment, then Polynesian Spa Pools is a must. Pool temperatures range from 91°F to 109°F and there are adult, family and private pools. Polynesian Spa Pools' Lake Spa Retreat offers more privacy and pampering, and you can select one of a package of spa treatments. Advance bookings for treatments are essential and are based on a rate of $65 per half-hour, although packages are also available. Polynesian Spa also has a large gift area that sells many New Zealand-made skin and health-care products. The café has a wide selection of food choices, including dairy- and gluten-free. 6:30 am to 11 pm, Lake Spa, 9 am to 9 pm; $12 for pools, $30 for lakeside pools. Hinemoa Street, ☎ 07-348-1328 or 0508-765-977, fax 07-348-9486, www.polynesianspa.co.nz.



The Blue Baths were built in the Government Gardens in the 1930s with fun in mind. Closed in 1982 when the city built a modern Olympic swimming pool, they were renovated, restored and reopened on December 31, 1999 – 66 years to the day after the initial grand opening. There is a fun museum set up in the former changing rooms, open 10 am to 6 pm (5 pm in winter); pools open 10 am to 7 pm, Monday to Friday and 10 am to 8 pm Saturday and Sunday. $18 adults. www.bluebaths.co.nz, Government Gardens, ☎ 07-350-2119, fax 07-350-2118.

Did you know? *The Blue Baths were the first place in New Zealand that offered mixed-sex bathing.*

Wai Ora Spa & Wellness Centre will leave your skin feeling soft and smooth, albeit looking a little gray! It's the only spa on a thermal reserve and all the products used are created using the mud from the reserve. There are two options for mud baths – the public and the private. The public side has the benefit of nicer views and a more social

experience. The private is, well, private. On the private side is where massages and facials are done and there is a guest lounge. The massage is traditional Maori, based on Miri Miri techniques – meaning that it incorporates spiritual as well as physical aspects. The spa complex is a part of Hell's Gate geothermal area (see above). Five minutes past the airport, toward Whakatane, ☎ 07-345-3151, fax 07-345-6481, www.hellsgaterotorua.co.nz.

◆ On Water

Lake Rotorua is the largest of the 11 major lakes in the area and on its shore is the city of Rotorua. The lakes are filled craters from extinct volcanoes. Many contain fish that attract anglers from around the world; others are popular with kayakers and sailors. The rivers vary from the soft and gentle to aggressive whitewater.

Rafting & Kayaking

With so many lakes and rivers around, it's no wonder that Rotorua is a kayaking- and rafting-mad area. For rafting, the Rangitaiki is grade IV; the Wairoa, only open 26 days a year, is grade V, as is the Kaituna, famous for its seven-meter (23-foot) waterfall – the highest commercially rafted waterfall in the world. Most rafting companies will pick you up at your accommodation.

Adventure Kayaking has a menu of kayak trips that span Lakes Rotorua, Rotoiti and Tarawera and last anywhere from two hours to several days. Most of the longer trips involve a soak in a thermal pool, which is a definite draw. Guided-trip prices begin at $55. You can also rent kayaks and equipment and go out on your own for $40 per day. www.adventurekayaking.co.nz, ☎ 07-348-9451.

Kaitiaki Adventures has rafting trips on the Kaituna and Wairoa, as well as sledging… you put on a helmet, wet suit and fins, lie down on a sled and hit the whitewater. The choice of river depends on the conditions, but this is your only option for a Grade V sledge! Rafting trips begin at $120, sledging at $115. www.raft-it.com, ☎ 0800-338-736.

Add a bit of white-water to the kayak experience with Kaituna Cascades. The trips are run in double kayaks, with you in the front and a superb kayaker in the back. Paddle through a narrow canyon with all

its stomach-lurching drops, including the seven-meter (23-foot) falls. Rafting trips on all three rivers are also available. From $65 per person. www.kaitunacascades.co.nz, ☎ 07-357-5032, fax 07-357-4370.

Kaituna Kayaks runs tandem trips on the Kaituna River with a guide sitting in the back. Kayak lessons are available, from beginner level to rolling and freestyle. A private lesson costs $120 for three hours, but get a friend to go along and it'll be just $70 each. Longer lessons and multi-day courses are available. This is a fabulous way to have some fun and improve your skills. www.kaitunakayaks.com, ☎ 021-465-292 or 0800-465-292.

If whitewater is your thing, but you prefer it in a raft, Raftabout has six-hour trips on the Wairoa and Rangitaiki and three-hour trips on the Kaituna. From $79 per person. www.raftabout.co.nz, ☎ 07-345-4652 fax 07-345-4654.

River Rats does the big three and adds the Tongariro to its menu. The Tongariro is a Grade III, suitable to the more meek of heart among the rafting crowd, but it is farther away (south of Taupo). From $69. www.riverrats.co.nz, ☎ 07-345-6543 or 0800-333-900, fax 07-345-6321.

In addition to the three rivers around Rotorua, Wet 'n' Wild also runs multi-day trips on the Motu and the Upper and Lower Mohaka – some of which are accessed by helicopter. From $70. www.wetnwildrafting.co.nz, 2 White Street, ☎ 07-348-3191 or 0800-462-7238, fax 07-349-6567.

Boating

Just 15 minutes from the busy-ness of Rotorua is Lake Tarawera – a peaceful retreat with plenty of fish, a few beaches and plenty of watersports options. The 41-square-kilometer (16-square-mile) lake provides access to short bush walks, Lake Tarawera Falls, Hot Water Beach and a few remote camping spots. Pick up a copy of *Lake Tarawera, A Very Special Place* from the information center. Along the way, stop at Lake Tikitapu (Blue Lake) and/or Lake Rotokakahi (Green Lake).

Leaving from the jetty at the Tarawera Landing, MV *Reremoana* takes visitors on scenic and trail cruises around Lake Tarawera. The scenic cruise is 45 minutes and a good intro to the area; the trail

cruise is just over two hours and drops you off at the head of Te Ariki. From here, you walk for about 20 minutes to Lake Rotomahana – the former site of the white and pink terraces that were destroyed in the 1886 eruption of Mt Tarawera. Trail cruise is $28 adults, $13.50 children; scenic $17.50 adults, $9 children. www.purerotorua.com, ☎ 07-362-8595 fax 07-362-8883.

Did you know? *The eels in Lake Tarawera can reach weights up to 25 kg (56 pounds).*

FISHING CHARTERS

Tip: *There are plenty of fishing guides and charters, but Ernie Skudder is considered the best. He takes a maximum of six people and isn't bothered if you're not experienced. www.troutflyco.nz, ☎/fax 07-332-3488 or 025-262-4226.*

You can also try Gordon Randle to either share a boat with others for a couple of hours or charter the boat for a few hours or the whole day. From $45 per hour. troutfishing@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 07-349-2555 or 025-938-733.

◆ On Foot

There are plenty of places to walk around the region. The closest tracks to town – ranging from 30 minutes to eight hours – are at The Redwoods. Walking tracks are accessed from Tarawera Road, off SH30. There is a visitor center with a shop that has gifts, maps and information. October to March, Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 6 pm; April to September, 8:30 am to 5 pm, weekends 10 am to 4 pm. www.redwoods.co.nz, ☎ 07-346-2082.

◆ On Bikes

On the North Island, Rotorua is "the" place to ride. If you're not traveling with your bike, you can rent one, either in town or at Whakarewarewa forest, in an area referred to as The Redwoods, where most of the great rides are located. The forest is managed by Fletcher Challenge Forests, has 40 km (25 miles) of single track and is just five minutes from

Rotorua. Contact the visitor center for more information at ☎ 07-346-2082.

◆ On Horses & the Farm

For an indoor sheep show, go to Agrodome, where the different breeds are introduced and stand on stage. You can see cows being milking and a re-enacted sheep auction, as well as sheepdog trials and a wool-carding demonstration. There are paua shell (New Zealand abalone), ice cream, and chocolate shops, in addition to a café. Open 8:30 am to 5 pm, farm shows at 9:30 am, 11 am and 2:30 pm. Adults $18 for farm show and chocolate factory tour, $35 including farm tour, $9 for children. www.agrodome.co.nz, Western Road, Ngongotaha, ☎ 07-357-1050, fax 07-357-5307.

Rainbow Springs has a native bush area, trout streams, an endangered species program and a kiwi recovery program. There is a good representation of native birds, trees and ferns. This is a lovely place to spend an afternoon. www.rainbownz.co.nz, Fairy Springs Road, ☎ 07-350-0440 or 0800-724-626.

◆ With Adrenaline

Skyline Skyrides gondola gives great panoramic views of the area and shouldn't cause a panic reaction; once you get to the top, you can opt for a few wilder rides. The Skyswing is a horrific option that will hurl you to 150 m (163 yards) in two seconds and the Rotorua Simulator has 25 different rides to choose from. The Luge (the first in the world) is the really big draw, though. Put on a helmet, sit on a hard molded little three-wheeled cart, and head down any one of three tracks. Return from the bottom on a chairlift and try it again. There are two eating options, a buffet and a café. The food seems rather uninspired. Gondola, adults $17, children $7. Family rates available and you can splurge on a photo pack for $30. Luge, $6 per ride; multi-ride deals and combos with other rides are available. Skyswing, $30. Rotorua simulator, $7. Gondola opens 9 am, while the luge and café open at 9:30 am. www.skylinesskirides.co.nz, Fairy Springs Road, ☎ 07-347-0027, fax 07-348-2163.

If you've ever wondered what it feels like to be a hamster, try Zorb. You have the option of either a dry ride – where you are harnessed inside a giant PVC ball and pushed down a 200-meter (656-foot) hill, or

a wet ride, where you go un-harnessed into the ball – along with a bucket of water – and are pushed down a hill. From $25. www.zorb.com, located by the Agrodome, ☎ 07-357-5100 or 0800-227-474, fax 07-357-5102.

◆ In the Air

Volcanic Wunderflites is run by the Rotorua Aero Club and has a range of options, from 15 minutes (around Lake Rotorua), to 2½ hours (around Lake Rotorua and down to Mt Ruapehu). www.webwings.co.nz/volcanic, www.redcat.co.nz, ☎ 07-345-6077, 0800-777-359 or 0800-733-228.

Volcanic Air Safaris operates floatplanes and helicopters from the lakefront. They specialize in trips to Mt Terawera and White Island. www.volcanicair.co.nz, ☎ 07-348-9984 or 0800-800-848, fax 07-348-4069.

In addition to scenic flights around Rotorua, HELiPRO also goes out to White Island. www.helipro.co.nz, ☎ 07-357-2512.

Tandem skydive trips are available through NZONE, the same company that operates in Queenstown, and is the longest operating tandem skydive company in New Zealand. Prices start at $245 and cost depend on altitude, from 9,000-15,000 feet. www.nzone.biz, ☎ 07-345-7520.

Sightseeing

I recommend a visit to the Rotorua Museum of Art & History. It is housed in The Bath House, once a spa where therapeutic treatments were offered to the very wealthy. Be sure you watch the two films – one on the history of Rotorua – includes a simulated earthquake – and one paying tribute to the Maori Battalion that fought in WWII. You can also tour the basement of the building, where the old pipes and treatment rooms are still in their 1900-1960 style. $10 adults, $4 children. Summer hours 9 am to 6 pm, winter 9 am to 5 pm. www.rotoruamuseum.co.nz, at the head of the government gardens, ☎ 07-349-4350, fax 07-349-2819.

Buried Village is just that. This is the site of Te Wairoa Village, which was destroyed in the June, 1886 eruption of Mt. Tarawera. Many buildings have been partially or fully excavated and more are set to be

Buried Village

unearthed. There is also a bush walk to Te Wairoa Falls, which weaves past the trout stream. A café is on-site. $18 adults, $6 children. www.buriedvillage.co.nz, Tarawera Road, ☎/fax 07-362-8287.

Take a trip to Mokoia Island, plopped right in the middle of Lake Rotorua. The island is predator-free and filled with birds, including North Island saddlebacks and robins. Mokoia Island Cruises. Scenic cruise $25 adults, children under 15 are free; landing on the island $30 adults, $15 children. Rotorualakescruises@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 07-347-9852.

You can get to the top of Mt Tarawera and the edge of its crater either by 4x4 or helicopter with Mt. Tarawera Volcano NZ Ltd. Being on top of a volcano is a fabulous experience and, if you can afford it, go for the helicopter option. $110 adults $65 children for 4x4; $390 per person for helicopter. www.mt-tarawera.co.nz, ☎ 07-349-3714, fax 07-349-3704.

Here's a way to get some much-needed alone time. Take the kids to 3D Maze and try to lose them in the giant labyrinth. $6 per person. On Te Ngae Road, about three km (two miles) past the airport. ☎ 07-345-5275, fax 07-345-9936.

Where to Stay

The cottages at Lake Tarawera Lodge are just 15 minutes from Rotorua, but they feel a world away. The cottages are recently renovated, with kitchen and bath,

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Per room, double occupancy	
$	under NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$101-$175
$$$$	over NZ$175

and provisions can be supplied. There are plenty of birds to listen to, a tennis court, and fabulous views. Good hiking and mountain biking are nearby – Lake Tarawere Lodge is just 10 minutes from the trails in the Redwoods area at Whakarewarewa Forest. Jeff Oakes is a fishing guide, but only about half the guests are there for fishing, so don't think of it as a fishing lodge. www.laketarawera.co.nz. Te Mu Road, ☎ 07-362-8754, fax 07-362-8704 ($$$-$$$$).

Ace Motor Lodge has simple, small rooms with in-room spas. Nothing fancy, but reasonably priced and friendly. 319 Fenton Street, ☎/fax 07-347-0452 ($$)..

Ascot Motel is extremely clean and comfortable with knowledgeable and friendly hosts. And it's a good value, within walking distance of downtown. www.ascotmotel.com, 247 Fenton Street, ☎ 07-348-7712, fax 07-348-7819 ($$-$$$).

New Castle Motor Lodge is new, off the main traffic road and has studios, suites and family units. I think this is one of the best values in town. www.newcastle.co.nz, 18 Ward Avenue, ☎ 07-346-3001 or 0508-227-853, fax 07-346-3007 ($$-$$$).

Eaton Hall Bed & Breakfast Hotel is undergoing some massive renovations in early 2004, so there will be more rooms with bathrooms. It's a big old home right in town and has single, double, twin and triple rooms. They have a huge breakfast area and rates include a full cooked breakfast. www.eatonhallbnb.cjb.net, 1255 Hinemaru Street, ☎/fax 07-347-0366 ($$).

For backpackers, go to Kiwi Paka YHA. There are lodge rooms, chalets, tent and campervan sites. There is a café and a swimming pool and, like the sister lodge in Waitomo, it's all new, clean and comfortable. Able to handle large numbers, it doesn't feel like one of those massive backpackers hostels with bed upon bed. www.kiwipaka-yha.co.nz, 60 Tarewa Road, ☎ 07-347-0931, fax 07-346-3167 ($).

Hot Rock is a good option for backpacker and motel-style rooms. There's also a bar, three pools, sundecks, all the extras. It's right by

Kauirau Park, so that makes for nice strolling and it's not so manic as right smack in the center of town. www.acb.co.nz/hot-rock, 1286 Arawa Street, ☎ 07-348-8636, fax 07-348-8616 ($).

All Seasons Holiday Park is out in Hannahs Bay and away from the hubbub of town. There are tourist flats, cabins, tent sites, a backpackers hostel and a large lodge. Swimming pool, BBQ, tennis, kayaks. www.allseasonsrotorua.co.nz, 50 Lee Road, ☎/fax 07-345-6240 or 0800-422-674 ($-$$).

Of all the holiday parks in the area, my top choice is Blue Lake Top 10 Holiday Park. The name gives it away. It's on the shores of Blue Lake, just 10 minutes from the city center, but a world away. All the usual accommodation choices are available, plus a heated spa pool, game room, playground, etc. www.bluelaketop10.co.nz, 723 Tarawera Road, ☎ 07-362-8120, fax 07-362-8600 ($-$$).

Where to Eat

There are more places than you will be able to sample, but a few to check out are on "The Streat" – Tutanekai Street.

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée	
$	under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$21-$30
$$$$	over NZ$30

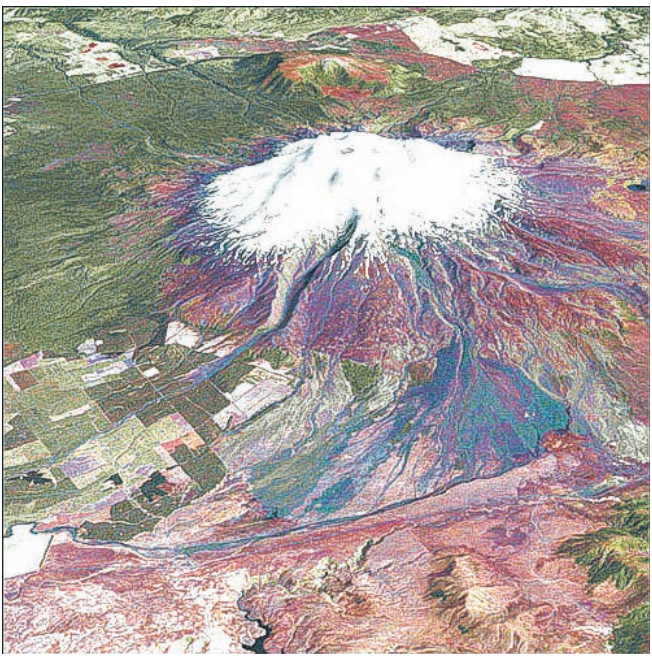
One of the best is You and Me. Great menu of lovely fresh innovative food and a good wine list, too. 1119 Pukuatua Street, ☎ 07-347-0368 ($$-$$$).

Zambique uses exotic foods and flavors, as well as local foods. 1111 Tutanekai Street, ☎ 07-349-2140 ($$-$$$).

Fat Dog Café & Bar serves up huge, fabulous meals – great choice of salads and veggie options as well as meat. Good baked treats, too. 1161 Arawa Street, ☎ 07-347-7586 ($-$$).

The Pig and Whistle has micro-brewed beer and better-than-bar-food at reasonable prices. Try a prawn burger or mushroom cannelloni. Live music on the weekends. Corner of Tutanekai and Haupapa Streets, ☎ 07-347-3025 ($$).

Capers Epicurean is the spot for foodies to go and buy those treats to take out. In addition to a great gourmet food shop, the food served is fabulous, too. They have a good deli-type counter, but also sit-down meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner (dinner Tuesday to Saturday). An interesting blend of choices on the menu, from beef to tofu. 1181 Eruera Street, ☎ 07-348-8818 ($$-$$$).



Mt Ruapehu volcano from space (NASA Earth Observatory)

The Central Plateau

Introduction

The Central Plateau encompasses Taupo, Tongariro and the forest parks bordering those areas. Activities inTaupo are mostly water-based; around Tongariro National Park, they are more land-based.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Getting Here 137
- Information Sources 138
- Lake Taupo & Around 139
- Turangi & Tokaanu 150
- Tongariro Natl Park 152
- Okahune 159

The area has a laid-back atmosphere, but geologically it's a happening place. The Taupo Volcanic Zone extends from White Island in the north through Rotorua, Taupo, Tongariro and Ruapehu. The Taupo area is one of the most active volcano sites in the world.

Lake Taupo has experienced 28 volcanic eruptions in the last 27,000 years. One single eruption was not responsible for the creation of the lake, but the Taupo eruption – which occurred in 181 AD – was the biggest anywhere in the world for the last 5,000 years. The Oruanui eruption, 26,500 years ago, was responsible for the caldera (large collapsed crater) shape. The Taupo eruption enlarged the caldera.

Ruapehu, at the tail-end of the zone, is a *cone* volcano. These have more frequent but smaller eruptions. Ruapehu, for example, has been erupting almost continuously for about 260,000 years!

Beware of amoebic meningitis! *When you are bathing or playing in any hot water springs or pools, do not put your head under the water.*

Getting Here

◆ By Air

Origin Pacific and Air New Zealand serve the Taupo Airport. Air New Zealand connects daily with Auckland and Wellington and Origin Pacific flies four times a

week to and from Wellington. The airport is 10 km (six miles) south of town, on the eastern side of the lake.

◆ By Car

Conveniently located in the center of the North Island, Lake Taupo and the rest of the Central Plateau are easy to reach. SH1 comes down from Auckland and continues on to Wellington, Taupo making a logical halfway stop between the two. SH5, dubbed the Thermal Explorer Highway, connects Taupo with Hawke's Bay and Rotorua. To Lake Taupo, it is approximately one hour from Rotorua, 3½ hours from Auckland, 4½ hours from Wellignton, and 1½ hours from Hawke's Bay.

◆ By Bus

All buses lead to Taupo, or so it seems. Services all around the North Island are available on InterCity, www.intercitycoach.co.nz, ☎ 09-913-6100, and Newmans Coachlines, www.newmanscoach.co.nz, ☎ 09-913-6200. They arrive and depart from the Travel Centre on Gascoigne Street in Taupo, ☎ 07-378-9032, and in Turangi from Ohuanga Road, ☎ 07-386-8918. You can book seats at the information centers or directly with the bus services.

Getting Around

There are quite a few shuttle companies that offer transport to the different activities – particularly to the ski areas in the winter and Tongariro National Park in the summer.

Information Sources

Destination Lake Taupo's website is www.laketauponz.com. These folks have wisely realized that some things in life can be free (or at least not cost a fortune) and have put together *Free Things To Do*, *Family Things To Do Under $60*, and *Rainy Day Activities*. Pick them up at the information center.

You might also want to check out www.backpacklaketaupo.com for general information.

Information centers are listed with each area below.

Lake Taupo & Around

Taupo, the town, is at the northeastern side of Lake Taupo. North of town, along the Waikato River, are many of the tourist sights and activities, including Huka Falls, Wairakei Terraces and Thermal Valley, and the jet-boat operators. There are quite a few lake-based attractions and the airport is along the eastern edge of the lake.

◆ Information Sources

The Taupo Information Centre is open daily and has DoC maps. (The DoC office is in the National Park.) Tongariro Street, ☎ 07-376-0027.

◆ Adventures

If you're interested in an adrenaline rush, consider 4PLAY – Huka Jet, Helistar, Taupo Bungy and Taupo Tandem Skydive have come together to make a package. Bookings available through any of the operators or at the information center. It'll save you some cash and give you all the thrills. ☎ 0800-368-775.

On Water

Lake Taupo is New Zealand's largest lake.

SWIMMING

AC Baths Complex has indoor and outdoor leisure pools, a competition pool, two hydro-slides and a learn-to-swim pool. $6.50 adults, $2.50 children. AC Baths Avenue, off Centennial Drive. ☎ 07-376-0359.

Where to Swim: *The sandiest beaches are the ones on the main waterfront. At the eastern end, hot water seeps out through the sand.*

KAYAKS & OTHER BOATS

Kayaking Kiwi runs half-day trips that include a swimming break at a beach and a stop for a visit at the Maori rock carvings. Trips run every morning and afternoon. You can also arrange longer trips, including full- and

multi-day trips and kayak/walk combinations. Another bonus, Kayaking Kiwi has a boat to transport the kayaks to more remote areas of the lake. www.kayakingkiwi.com, ☎ 07-378-0909 or 027-288-1137, fax 07-378-0929.

❖ ABOUT THOSE ROCK CARVINGS

The Maori Rock carvings at Kaiapo Point, over 10 meters (32 feet) high (reputedly the highest carvings of their kind), can only be accessed by boat, and tell the stories of the area. It's pretty amazing to be sitting in a kayak looking up at the serpents, birds and other forms, realizing how difficult it would be to carve them from the water (or hanging over it). They are not ancient carvings – far from it. Of the two artists who created the work, one still lives in Taupo, the other not far away.

The *Ernest Kemp* is a steam boat and offers two-hour trips to the Maori rock carvings and hot-water beach. $28 adults, $10 children. ☎ 07-378-3444

You don't have to be around Lake Taupo for long before you see the name Chris Jolly. Just about anything you want to do on the water and off can be arranged, including water skiing, hiring boats, scenic cruises, helicopter flights, fly fishing, hunting, you name it. These folks have been around forever, and know what's up. www.chrisjolly.co.nz, Taupo Harbour Office. ☎ 07-378-5596 or 07-378-0623.

Rivers

Kiwi River Safaris runs kayak trips on the Waikato River, Rangitaiki, Wairoa, Tongariro and Mohaka (two-day trip) rivers. The four-hour trip on the Waikato River goes underneath the Taupo Bungy and in-

cludes a stop for a soak at a natural hot pool. $40 adults, $25 children. The Rangitaiki is their most popular and is two hours of rafting through grade III and IV rapids for $90. Lunch is included, as is transport from town to the river. www.krs.co.nz, ☎ 07-377-6597 or 0800-723-8577.

Waikato River Discovery runs guided trips on the Waikato River at $40 adults, $25 children and offers kayaking instruction. Based at the Canoe & Kayak Shop, they also rent out kayaks and equipment, and can be found on the lakeshore during the summer. 38 Nukuhau Street, ☎ 0800-529-256.

JET-BOATS

Three jet-boat companies operate around Taupo, each in a different area of the Waikato River. Depending on the length of the trip, prices start around $69 for an adult.

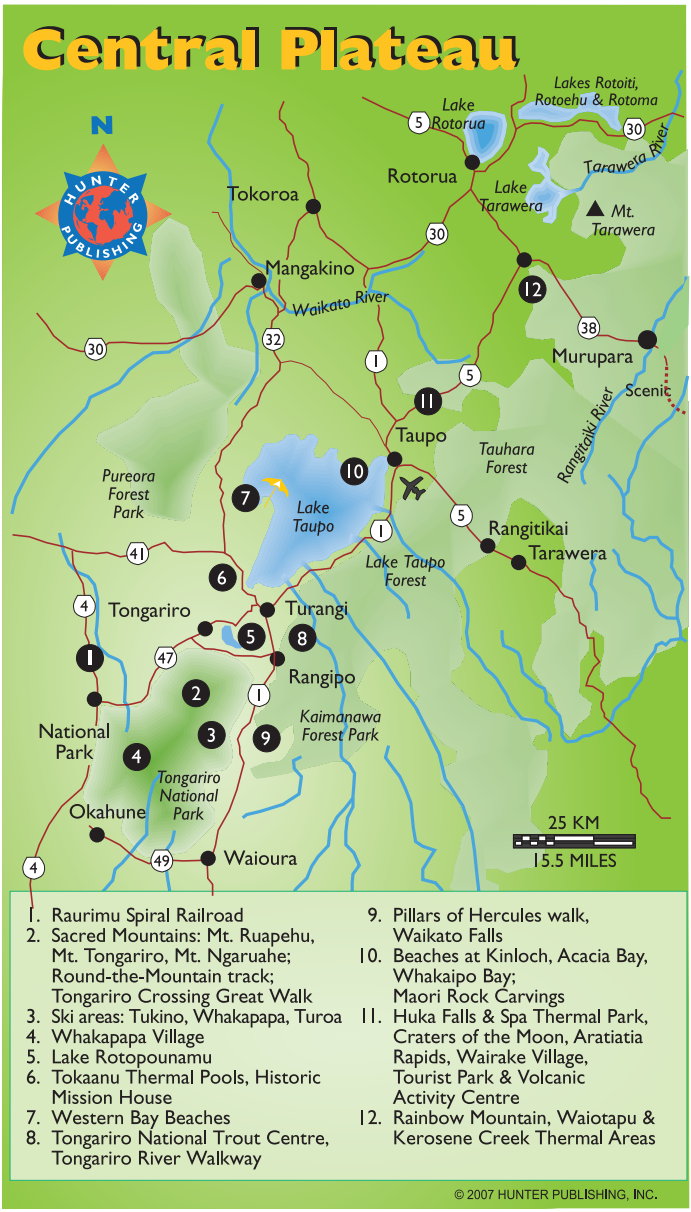
Nearest to town is Huka Jet. The trip to Aratiatia Dam has more than a couple of 360-degree turns as you blast to the top of Aratiatia Dam and then back down to Huka Falls. www.hukajet.com, Wairakei Tourist Park (Huka Falls Road), ☎ 07-374-8572 or 0800-485-2538.

NZ River Jet is about halfway (30 minutes to either) between Taupo and Rotorua on SH5, just north of Tutukau Road. They have three trip options, ranging from 30 minutes to two hours, the longest going to the Aratiatia rapids. You can also arrange to access the Hidden Valley of Orakei Korako. www.riverjet.co.nz, ☎ 07-333-7111.

Rapids Jet leaves from Rapids Road off Aratiatia Road and shoots the Fuljames Rapids, then plays at the base of the Aratiatia rapids. It's a wet ride and a teeny bit scary to boot. www.rapidsjet.com, ☎ 07-378-5828 or 0800-727-437.

FISHING

Lake Taupo and neighboring rivers claim to be the trout capital of the world and there aren't enough pages to list all the fishing guides and spots! For fly-fishing on the rivers, try Will Kemp, a young guy who grew up fishing around here and is great for serious, experienced anglers and is also patient enough for those wanting to give it a try (he put up with me, after all). www.tongariroflyfishing.co.nz, ☎ 07-386-6545 or 021-633-685.



1. Raurimu Spiral Railroad
2. Sacred Mountains: Mt. Ruapehu, Mt. Tongariro, Mt. Ngaruahe; Round-the-Mountain track; Tongariro Crossing Great Walk
3. Ski areas: Tukino, Whakapapa, Turoa
4. Whakapapa Village
5. Lake Rotopounamu
6. Tokaanu Thermal Pools, Historic Mission House
7. Western Bay Beaches
8. Tongariro National Trout Centre, Tongariro River Walkway
9. Pillars of Hercules walk, Waikato Falls
10. Beaches at Kinloch, Acacia Bay, Whakaipo Bay; Maori Rock Carvings
11. Huka Falls & Spa Thermal Park, Craters of the Moon, Aratiatia Rapids, Wairake Village, Tourist Park & Volcanic Activity Centre
12. Rainbow Mountain, Waiotapu & Kerosene Creek Thermal Areas

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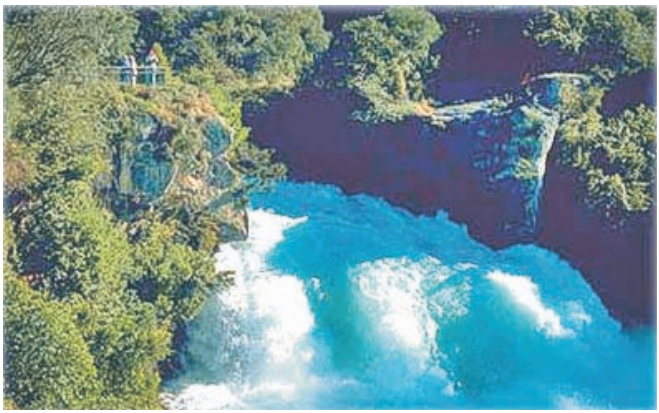
Mt. Tongariro - Tongariro Crossing (Destination Lake Taupo/Marcel Tromp)



Huka Falls

Another one to try is White Striker, which has two boats and caters to serious fishermen and tourists who want to catch a fish on the lake. www.troutcatching.com, ☎ 07-378-2736.

Brown trout *were first released in the area in 1885; rainbows came in 1898.*

On Foot

One walk not to miss is a four-hour round-trip walk from Huka Falls to the Aratiatia Rapids. It starts with great river views of the falls and then climbs onto the cliff tops for fabulous views before descending and following the river to the Aratiatia Rapids. Schedule your walk to coincide with the opening of the control gates (10 am, noon, 2 pm and 4 pm).

The Spa Thermal Park has thermal river walks, a recreation reserve, a fun and fitness trail, and a flying fox. At the end of County Avenue.

On Bikes

The opportunities for all levels of mountain biking are plenty and many are easy to reach – I suggest going into one of the bike shops and getting some local knowledge for what's hot. Some of my picks include Craters of the Moon, where there are a variety of tracks through the forest to suit all levels of experience. The ride from Huka Falls to Aratiatia

Dam takes a couple of hours and, if you start in town, is a respectable 26 km (16 miles).

On Horses

There are several hundred wild horses in the Kaimanawa ranges around the Waiouru Army base. The first was reported in the area in 1876, and their presence here is the result of escapes and releases of animals in the area.

For a farm and horse experience with well-trained horses, contact Harakeke. This is a professional operation that's located on a working dairy, sheep and horse farm and run by life-long professional equestrians. www.taupoequestrian.co.nz, SH1, ☎ 07-377-3545.

Taupo Horse Treks has one- to two-hour rides through pine forest and to lookouts over Craters of the Moon thermal reserve. Karapiti Road, ☎ 07-378-0356.

In the Air

Poised above the Waikato River is Taupo Bungy. Choose between either a wet or dry option and then jump from 47 meters (153 feet). www.taupobungy.com, Spa Road, ☎ 0800-888-408.

Taupo has become a real destination for skydiving and, if you ever thought about doing it, here's a good place to give it a go. The views are spectacular and all the companies offer upgrades that include video and/or still photos.

Taupo Tandem Skydiving was the first to offer tandem in New Zealand and is not only the biggest in Taupo, but in the world. Drops are from 6,000 feet to 15,000 feet and they can handle up to 220 people per day. But you don't feel like a number. They've kept the prices reasonable – beginning at $185 – and are completely professional. www.tts.net.nz, ☎ 07-377-0428 fax 07-378-0468.

Skydive Taupo has jumps from 12,000 and 15,000 feet, with prices beginning at $200. www.skydivetaupo.co.nz, ☎ 0800-586-766.

Freefly jumps from 9,000, 12,000 and 15,000 feet and prices start at $195. www.freefly.co.nz, ☎ 07-378-4662 or 0800-373-335.

For those who would prefer to stay in the airplane, there are a number of scenic flights available. Helistar offers a wide range of scenic flights around the area. Even if you take a short one, it's a good way

to see the place and put it all into perspective. www.helistar.co.nz, 415 Huka Falls Road, ☎ 07-374-8405 or 0800-435-478, fax 07-374-8406.

Taupo Air Services has scenic trips around the Volcanic Plateau, out to White Island and around the mountains. A quick trip around Taupo starts at $65 and prices go up from there. taupo.air@xtra.co.nz, Taupo Airport, ☎ 07-378-5325.

For a flight with a difference, consider Floatplane. Take off from the boat harbor and tour around the Volcanic Plateau, Lake Taupo and as far as White Island. Trips begin at $60. nkemp@xtra.co.nz, Ferry Road, ☎ 07-378-7500.

On Wheels

You can go quad biking with Taupo Quads, about 24 km (15 miles) north of Taupo on SH1 by Tutukau Road. Prices start at $60 for an hour's bash around the farm and bush. You can splurge on a full-day wilderness tour. Call for details. Bookings are essential. www.4x4quads.com, ☎ 07-377-6404.

Gravity Hill is the only mountain-board park in Australasia. These contraptions are like snowboards with wheels. Prices start at $29 for an introductory hour that includes safety gear, instruction and board use. Rakaunui Road, ☎ 07-377-4299 or 0800-472-848.

◆ Cultural Activities

Try Wairakei Terraces for an introduction to Maori culture. It's been open since 2002 and offers a more intimate experience than some of the higher-profile shows in Rotorua. The evening begins with a *powhiri* (traditional welcome) and *wero* (challenge). This is followed by a guided tour of the village where traditional crafts are demonstrated (this part seemed a bit over-acted to me) and hangi or traditional Maori meal. The Maori concert is performed during the hangi and the hangi meal was probably the best I've had – not over-smoked or dried out at all! Guided tours of the power plant and steam field are also available during the day. Open daily, 9 am to 5 pm for tours of the village (independent or guided), animal park and carving workshop. The visitor center has audio-visual displays about power generation. Contact the visitor center to inquire about evening performances – days may vary. Day admission $18 adults, $9 children; evening $75

adults, $37.50 children. www.wairakeiterraces.co.nz, SH5, ☎/fax 07-378-0913.

Did you know? *Large caldera volcanoes like Taupo are associated with geothermal systems where underground water is heated by the volcano. The Wairakei geothermal area produces about 8% of New Zealand's electricity.*

◆ Thermal Activities

The Volcanic Activity Centre in the Wairakei Tourist Park has interactive displays explaining all the activity that's going on underground while we merrily make our way through life. There is also an extensive volcano-inspired gift shop. $5 adults, $2.50 children. www.volcanoes.co.nz, ☎ 07-374-8375.

Craters of the Moon

Craters of the Moon is an area of thermal activity that is operated by DoC. It's very natural, doesn't have the hype or commercial feel of most of the other thermal areas, and is free. Volunteers who look after cars in the car park also run a small shop at the entrance and sell postcards, snacks, etc. Donations are appreciated. Open daily until dusk. Karapiti Road, off SH1.

Tucked into the bush 25 minutes north of Tahoe is the Hidden Valley of Orakei Korako, on the shores of Lake Ohakuri. It can only be accessed by boat, so it is more natural than many areas and receives fewer visitors, making your time here a bit more special. Another point of difference is the Ruatapu Cave, which is 40 meters (130 feet) deep, and the large, brightly colored silica terraces. The self-guided walk around colorful pools, active geysers and bubbling mud holes takes about an hour. Café, kayaks and rowboats. Backpacker accommodation is also available. Opens at 8 am daily. www.

orakeikorako.co.nz, Orakei Korako Road. It's accessed from Tutukau Road, which runs between SH1 and SH5, then you by boat launch, ☎ 07-378-3131.

Just outside of town is Taupo Hot Springs & Health Spa. Mineral pools (private pools available) of varying temperatures, waterslides and spa treatments. Open daily, 7:30 am to 9:30 pm, $8 adults, $3 children. www.taupohotsprings.com, SH5 (Napier-Taupo Road), ☎ 07-377-6502, fax 07-377-6501.

◆ Sightseeing

Don't miss the Aratiatia Falls. The Aratiatia rapids are part of a huge hydroelectric power station. Water is released during the winter at 10 am, 12 noon and 2 pm; during the summer at those times and at 4 pm. The release lasts for 30 minutes. It's especially cool before the water is released when you can see the boulders dry. About 10 km (six miles) north of Taupo; follow the signs on SH5.

A little closer to Taupo on SH1, is Huka Falls, the major waterfall on the Waikato River. The force of the water is amazing – 220,000 liters (62,000 gallons) per second blast through the narrows – enough to fill two Olympic-sized swimming pools every second. The locals say that Huka Falls are New Zealand's most visited natural attraction.

◆ Where to Stay

The largest complex in Taupo is Wairakei Resort, slightly out of town and directly across from a golf course. There are executive suites, studios and villas. Two restaurants, swimming pools, tennis courts, a full gym and lovely gardens make the list complete. Near the river, and you can walk to Huka Falls. www.wairakeiresort.co.nz, SH5, ☎ 07-374-8021 or 0800-737-687 ($$$-$$$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Per room, double occupancy	
$	under NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$101-$175
$$$$	over NZ$175

The Terraces Hotel was built in 1889 and is a stately, grand resort adjacent to the Taupo Hot Springs. www.terraceshotel.co.nz, SH5, ☎ 07-378-7080, fax 07-378-4174 ($$$$).

The Caboose African Express is themed around a rail trip in Africa. All the decorations and furniture are African and the restaurant

serves wonderful meals (with a lot of game on the menu) overlooking the lake. Great bar, too. www.taupo.caboose.co.nz, 100 Lake Terrace, ☎ 07-376-0116 ($$-$$$).

The Cove is a great choice for lakefront accommodation. Studios and suites (rumor is that one has a vibrating bed) with wonderful views and modern, stylish decorations. www.thecove.co.nz, 213 Lake Terrace, ☎ 07-378-7599, fax 07-378-7393 ($$$-$$$$).

Clearwater Motor Lodge is right on the lake with its very own hot-water stream running alongside. Very comfortable units with full kitchen and spa baths in all. Just down the beach from Hot Water Beach. www.clearwatermotorlodge.co.nz, 229 Lake Terrace, ☎ 07-377-2071, fax 07-377-0020 ($$$).

For a good value motel, try Lakeland of Taupo. Nice grounds, simple place, nothing too fancy, but there is a tennis court and two pools. www.lakeland.co.nz, 282 Lake Terrace, ☎ 07-378-3893, fax 07-378-3891 ($$).

The backpackers lodge of choice is Tiki Lodge. Brand new in 2003, this is a luxury backpackers hostel with dorms and doubles. The large, modern kitchen opens to a deck that is a magnificent spot for sitting outside looking at the lake. Maori art adorns the place and is focused mainly on (you guessed it) the Tiki. Undercover parking. The prices are a tad more than some backpackers, but definitely worth it. www.tikilodge.co.nz, 104 Tuwharetoa Street, ☎ 07-377-4545, fax 07-377-4585 ($).

The Lake Taupo Top 10 Holiday Park is a real winner. It's big and well-planned and there is plenty of space for all the guests. There is a huge range of accommodation from tent spaces and simple cabins to motel units. Very clean and the units are updated regularly. Tennis courts, swimming pool, gigantic games room. www.taupotop10.co.nz, 28 Centennial Drive, ☎/fax 07-378-6860 ($-$$).

DeBretts Thermal Resort is set in a mature landscape at the same location as Taupo Hot Springs Spa. Standard cabins, lodges and studios, as well as powered and non-powered camping sites; there is also a licensed restaurant/café. www.debrettresort.co.nz, SH5, ☎ 07-378-8559, fax 07-377-2181 ($-$$).

◆ Where to Eat

Max Licensed Café is open 24 hours a day (rather unusual in New Zealand) and has "great food fast." Nice full meals of fish, lamb and beef as well as a huge burger menu and baked things. Good coffee too. 38 Roberts Street, ☎ 07-378-8444 ($).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée	
$	under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$21-$30
$$$$	over NZ$30

My choice for the best fudge brownies in town goes to Replete Café, who also happen to make wonderful sandwiches. 45 Heu Heu Street ($-$$).

The Bantry Restaurant has contemporary New Zealand cuisine served in a cozy atmosphere. Tasty mains include fish of the day, lamb, beef and chicken, but not much in the way of vegetarian options. Very nice wine list. ☎/fax 07-378-0484, 45 Rifle Range Road ($$$).

The finest food and service is at The Bach. World-class chefs, great food, perfect atmosphere. And they also make pizza. 2 Pataka Road, ☎ 07-378-7856 ($$-$$$).

Turangi & Tokaanu

At the southern end of Lake Taupo, 40 minutes from the town of Taupo, is Turangi, "The Trout Fishing Capital of the World." Around the lake a bit farther is Tokaanu. In addition to great fishing, there are some good walks based here. The town came into being because of the construction of a major hydroelectric plant in the early 1960s.

◆ Information Sources

The Turangi Visitor Centre is on Ngawaka Place, ☎ 07-386-8999.

DoC is on Turanga Plance (just off the intersection of SH1 and SH41), ☎ 07-386-8607, fax 07-386-7086.

◆ Adventures

On Water

The Tongariro National Trout Centre is run by DoC and has a trout-spawning stream, underwater viewing chamber and interpretive displays. Definitely worth a stop, and it's free! Three km (less than two miles) south of Turangi. ☎ 07-386-9243.

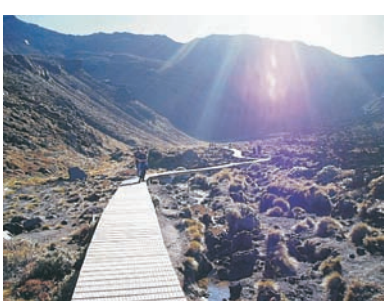
Turangi is a popular fishing destination (see *Taupo* section, page 141, for guide options) and is also the base for whitewater in the region.

Kayaks and rafts are the two ways to go with Rock 'n' River. Choose from a half-day self-guided trip in the lake or streams, or hit the whitewater of the Tongariro, Mohaka, Rangitaiki, Rangitikei or Wairoa. Prices begin at $40 per person for the half-day, self-guided. www.raftingnewzealand.com, SH41, Tokaanu, ☎ 07-386-0352 or 0800-865-226.

You can soak in hot water springs at Tokaanu Thermal Pools. There is a children's pool, a large public pool and family-sized private pools. A short walk wanders through native bush and a trout stream edges the property. Open daily, 10 am to 9 pm. $4 adults, $2 children. Mangaroa Street, ☎ 07-386-8575.

On Foot & by Bike

There are some great short loops and one-way tracks around Turangi. Pick up a copy of the DoC brochure *Turangi Walks* at the information center. Walks vary in length from five minutes to 2½ hours.



A popular option in the Kaimanawa is the Pillars of Hercules walk – it starts with a steep set of steps and offers views of the gorge where the river has eroded a path through lava flows. It's only about 10 minutes, and begins about two km (just over a mile) on Kaimanawa Road.

Two of the most popular walks, also open to mountain bikes, are in the Kaimanawa Forest Park and accessed by Kaimanawa Road. You need a permit for this road, available at the Turangi Information

Centre or the Rotoaira Forest Trust office, also in Turangi. Tree Trunk Gorge walk takes about 2½ hours on foot (in and out on the same track) and goes through native bush along the old power access road. It offers great views on a clear day. Tongariro River Trail is just south of Turangi and is popular for both walkers and bikers.

◆ Where to Stay

Tongariro River Motel offers simple, dependable motel units near to the Tongariro River. Corner SH1 and Link Road, ☎ 07-386-8555 or 0800-187-688 ($$).

Tucked away in the trees, right on the river, and affordable, is The Creel Lodge. Taupahi Road, ☎/fax 07-386-8081 ($$).

New on the backpacker scene, is Extreme Backpackers, where there is a large lounge, Internet access, big kitchen, a nice outdoor area and free coffee and tea. Site of the Vertical Assault climbing wall. www.extremebackpackers.co.nz, 26 Ngawaka Place, ☎ 07-386-8949, fax 07-286-8946 ($).

◆ Where to Eat

In addition to some takeout options, Red Crater Café has gourmet burgers and pizza, coffee and smoothies. At the Vertical Assault climbing wall (above). 26 Ngawaka Place, ☎ 07-386-8949, fax 07-286-8946 ($).

Tongariro National Park

Established in 1887, Tongariro National Park, a World Heritage area, is the oldest National Park in New Zealand and the fourth-oldest in the world. It became a national park when Te Heuheu Tunkin IV, the then-paramount chief of the Ngati Tuwharetoa, gifted the three sacred peaks – Ruapehu, Ngaruahoe and Tongariro – to the government. It's 49 km (30 miles) from Turangi to the National Park on SH32. Driving to the area, as you climb onto the plateau that has a desert, Mars-like feel, the terrain changes, the flora changes, and the weather changes. Mt. Ruapehu is New Zealand's largest active volcano – it last erupted in 1996 and before that in 1995. Ruapehu is also home to the largest single ski field in New Zealand.

This area was the location for a quite a lot of the Lord of the Rings filming. Standing beside Mt. Ruapehu is Mt. Ngauruhoe, or "Mt. Doom."

◆ Getting Around

Tongariro Track Transport runs from National Park and Whakapapa. ☎ 07-892-3716 or 021-563-109.

Howard's Lodge provides shuttle transport for the Tongariro Crossing and for the 42nd Traverse (see *On Foot,* below). They also have equipment and clothes for rent. ☎ 07-892-2827.

Tongariro Expeditions services Taupo and Turangi and also provides transport for the Waihohonu Traverse, in addition to the Tongariro Crossing. ☎ 07-377-0435.

Tip: *Whakapapa Village is in Tongariro National Park. The town of National Park is about 15 km (nine miles) from Whakapapa Village.*

◆ Information Sources

The Whakapapa Visitor Centre is in Whakapapa Village and also has a DoC office. There is great information and interpretive displays about the area, its formation and history. Be sure to watch the two movies – one on the creation of the area and one on the National Park. Check in here for an up-to-date weather forecast. 8 am-6 pm in summer, to 5 pm in winter. ☎ 07-892-3729, fax 07-892-3814.

Did you know? *The DoC runs a summer program from the end of December to the beginning of February, with guided day-trips, evening talks and lots of walks and interactive programs. There are bike trips, guided night walks, all sorts of options. Contact DoC at Whakapapa for information.*

For weather information in the area, phone Met Service, ☎ 0900 999 15.

◆ Adventures

On Foot

There are many walks around the area, and DoC has produced a good series of brochures on them. Stop in the DoC office and pick up the appropriate ones – Whakapapa Walks, Round the Mountain, Tongaririo Crossing, etc.

By far the most popular is the Tongariro Crossing, one of New Zealand's Great Walks. It's 17 km (10½ miles) long and takes between six and eight hours, passing steam vents, brightly colored lakes – filled explosion craters – and lava flows along the way. The views from the track (at the highest it's 1,900 meters/6,175 feet) are fabulous. Track transport (from National Park and Whakapapa Village) is available through a number of operators and guiding services are also available. See *Getting Around*, page 153, for transport operators.

Cabbage trees, with Mt. Ruapehu in the distance

The Northern Traverse, 50-km (31-mile) circuit, a three- to four-day trip, or the Round the Mountain track, which is four to six days around Mt. Ruapehu. The Northern Traverse

takes in most of the Tongariro Crossing and passes Mounts Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe and Tongariro. It also goes past lava flows, the Tama Lakes, Taranaki Falls and glacial valleys.

One of the best short walks in New Zealand is around Lake Rotopounamu ("greenstone lake"). It only takes an hour or two and it's under the canopy, so you can do it in the rain. There are fabulous specimens of old-growth trees. On a clear day, plan to have a picnic on one of the beaches; the water is clear and the lake warms up nicely in the summer. On SH47.

GUIDED OPTIONS

Guided walks on the Tongariro Crossing, Northern Circuit and other local walks are available through Outdoor Experiences. In addition to the one-day crossing, they offer guided three-day trips on the Northern Circuit, walks to the summit of Mt. Ruapehu and Mt. Ngauruhoe, as well as other options to suit your needs. www.tongarironz.com, across from the Grand Chateau, ☎ 0800-806-369.

David Otway from Kayaking Kiwi leads guided walks around the region, including Opepe Forest, Pureora Forest, and Lake Rotopounamu. David's father is a volcanologist who has passed on plenty of information about the area to David – he has a very informative, but laid-back approach. www.ecoexplorer.co.nz, ☎ 07-378-0909 or 0800-529-255, fax 07-378-0929.

On Bikes

Tongariro Forest 42nd Traverse is probably the most famous ride around here and takes three to five hours. Be careful, as the track is shared with quad bikes, horses and walkers. Transport and bike rental is available through Howard's Lodge (see *Where to Stay*, page 157, for details).

On Horses & Quad Bikes

John Smythe operates Horse Trax to the Max and leads rides into the mountains from a base outside of Owhango. John is a very cool guy, half-Maori, half-pakeha and shares his beliefs and traditions while riding some of the most beautiful land around. He has a string of horses that all have their own personalities. John will challenge your riding

ability through a variety of terrain. He offers rides from two hours to multiple days, staying at shearer's quarters along the way. You'll go deep into the mountains and, from their tops, have views you won't believe. Bookings essential. Oio Road ☎ 07-895-6161.

The Raurimu Spiral

In 1908, the Raurimu Spiral was completed, bringing plaudits to New Zealand for this railroad engineering feat. Using three horseshoe curves, two short tunnels and one complete circle, the main trunk rail line connecting Auckland to Wellington rises over 700 feet in seven miles, instead of the three miles of actual distance covered.

You can see the spiral from a lookout at Raurimu; you can also do a round-trip day excursion between Taumaranui and National Park.

In the Air

Based near Whakapapa, Mountain Air runs scenic volcanic flights around Tongariro from 15 to 35 minutes. Prices begin at $70 per person. www.mountainair.co.nz, ☎ 07-892-2812 or 0800-922-812.

On Snow

Mt. Ruapehu boasts the largest ski area in NZ, the highest lift access in New Zealand, and the longest vertical drop in Australasia. It's also the largest individual ski resort in New Zealand and on a live volcano. www.mtruapehu.com, ☎ 07-892-3738, fax 07-892-3732.

Tukino ski field is on the eastern slope of the mountain and requires 4WD to access. Lift passes are only $30 for adults, $20 for children. With 65% beginner runs, this is a good place to introduce the kids to the sport. www.tukino.co.nz, 22 km (14 miles) north of Waiouru or 46 km (29 miles) south of Turangi on SH1 (the Desert Road), the seven-km (four-mile) turnoff road is sign-posted, ☎ 0800-885-466.

◆ Sightseeing

From mid-December to April, scenic chairlifts operate on Mt. Ruapehu, from Top O' the Bruce at the base of Whakapapa Ski Area (a shuttle bus is available from Whakapapa Village). The lift goes to 2,020 meters (6,565 feet), and then you can walk to the Dome Shelter at 2,670 meters (8,677 feet). There are two cafés at the top, as well as guided walks from the top of the chair to the summit of Mt. Ruapehu. Chairlifts operate from 9 am to 4 pm. Round-trip fare: $17 adults, $9 children. www.mtruapehu.com, ☎ 07-892-3738.

◆ Where to Stay

Whakapapa Village

The Grand Chateau is a Kiwi icon. Built in 1929, it is a grand old lady sitting in front of the majestic mountains. There is a big, old-fashioned lounge, filled with chairs where you can curl up and read, stare out the window at the mountains, or listen to the piano player. Two restaurants are available, a formal à la carte off the main lounge and a more relaxed bar/restaurant on the ground floor. A variety of room choices are available and the prices are quite reasonable, considering the location and style. www.chateau.co.nz, ☎ 07-892-3809 or 0800-242-832, fax 07-892-3704 ($$-$$$$).

The Skotel is behind the Chateau on Ngauruhoe Place and has hotel units in addition to chalets with kitchen and bath and backpackers accommodation. A friendly, low-key place to stay. www.skotel.co.nz ☎ 07-892-3777 or 0800-756-835 ($-$$$).

Whakapapa Holiday Park has tent sites, power sites, cabins and a lodge. There is also a small camp store. whakapapaholpark@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 07-892-3897 or 0800-756-835, fax 07-892-3026 ($).

National Park

A terrific boutique hotel Tongariro Crossing Lodge opened in 2003. There are six spacious suites, all stylishly decorated and all with private lounges. The common breakfast room is very comfortable and, with a chef on-site, lunch and dinner are available by arrangement. www.tongarirocrossinglodge.com, 37 Carroll Street, ☎ 07-892-2688 ($$$).

Lake Rotoaira, Tongariro National Park

Adventure Lodge & Motel has bunks and doubles with shared-bath facilities, as well as studio units with kitchenettes. There's a nice big lounge, a separate TV room, and two spas. Meals are available as well. www.adventurenationalpark.co.nz, Carroll Street, ☎ 07-892-2991 or 0800-321-061, fax 07-892-2799 ($-$$).

Howard's Lodge has budget, standard and deluxe accommodation. Very accommodating, they'll make bookings for you, rent equipment (including tramping, biking and skiing gear) and provide transport (for biking and tramping). www.howardslodge.co.nz, 11 Carroll Street, ☎/fax 07-892-2827 ($-$$).

National Park Backpackers has dorms with shared-bath, quads, doubles and twins with en-suite bathrooms. There are two kitchens, a shop, BBQ area and a wood-fired spa. This is also the site of the indoor climbing wall, and track transport is available. www.npbp.co.nz, ☎/fax 07-892-2870, Finlay Street ($).

◆ Where to Eat

Whakapapa Village

There are two restaurants at the Chateau and also a pub that serves food. The Ruapehu Restaurant is the "white linen" option, serving breakfast (buffet and à la carte), lunch and dinner. The dinner menu is the most extravagant in the area and bookings are essential. ☎ 07-892-3809 ($$$). Downstairs, the Pihanga Café ($$) is more casual and serves a wide range of pasta, meats and (surprisingly) burritos. It's my favorite at the Chateau for dinner – midway between the pretentiousness of the Ruapehu and the bar meals at the Whakapapa Tavern ($-$$), which is just across the hall.

There is one restaurant at the Skotel, which is open for breakfast (7-9 am) and dinner (6-9 pm). Packed lunches are available if ordered the night before. Dinner has an à la carte menu (including casual meals such as pizza) and daily specials. Reservations are necessary for dinner. ☎ 07-892-3719 ($$-$$$).

National Park

Pub food and full meals are available at Schnapps Bar on Findlay Street. ☎ 07-892-2788 ($-$$).

Café-style food is at Eivins Café, recently rebuilt after a fire. Corner of SH4 and Carroll Street, ☎ 07-892-2844 ($-$$).

At the railroad station is The Station café, which opens every day at 11 am and stays open through dinner every day but Tuesday. Fresh modern food in a modern, trendy place. Findlay Street, ☎ 07-892-2854 ($$)

Ohakune

In Ohakune, on SH49, there is a sign – "Ohakune, Where Adventures Begin." Right next to it is a gigantic carrot, which seems a somewhat bizarre combination.

Ohakune, in addition to being a big carrot-growing area, is also the gateway to two national parks – the Whanganui and the Tongariro. It's the happening spot during ski season, but it is also a great base for trips on the Whanganui River and walks in the Tongariro National Park. Tongariro National Park is easily accessed by the Ohakune Mountain Road, an incredibly picturesque 17-km (10½-mile) drive through lowland and beech forest and subalpine shrub.

◆ Information Sources

The Ruapehu Visitor Centre is at 54 Clyde Street, ☎ 06-385-8427 or 0800-782-734.

The DoC office is on Ohakune Mountain Road, just over the railroad tracks.

◆ Adventures

On Water

Ohakune is the base for many of the canoe companies that run trips on the Whanganui River.

Canoeing down the Whanganui River is a fabulous way to spend a holiday. While the majority of the river is navigable, the section from Taumarunui to Pipirii is the most popular for canoeing. Within that area, the most popular option is from Ohipnae or Whakahoro to Pipiriki. I did a four-day trip through the middle reaches (90 km/56 miles from Whakahoro to Pipiriki), and it was a perfect length of time – long enough to "get away from it all" but not so long that you get tired of it. There are some great swimming holes along the way, waterfalls to investigate, campsites with water and long drops, everything you need to be comfortable and remote. Mobile phones don't work, there are no roads, and in four days (maybe three) you can get into a rhythm of being on the river. While many of the outfitters rent canoes and gear, going with a guided group alleviates the hassle of transport, permits, provisioning and cooking (plus the guides know where all the good camping spots are). In addition to camping areas, there are three Great Walk/serviced DoC huts on the river.

Mt. Ruapehu in full eruption, 1996

GUIDED OPTIONS

Author's pick: *Canoe Safaris runs first-rate two- to five-day fully catered canoe trips. They cover 37½-50 km/23-30 miles or 90-125 km/56-78 miles. You can opt for a kayak, if you prefer, but my feeling is a river like this deserves a canoe. Rafting and canoeing trips on the Mohaka, Rangitikei and Clarence*

rivers are also available. For adults, prices range from $300 to $785 for two- to five-day trips; for children, $200 to $485. www.canoesafaris.co.nz, Ohakune, ☎ 06-385-9237 or 0800-2723-353, fax 06-385-8758.

Also based in Ohakune, is Yeti Tours, which offers two-day (36½ km/23 miles), four-day (87½ km/55 miles,) and six-day (125½ km/78 miles) guided canoe and kayak trips. Camping is along the way and you can opt for the "luxury tour" with portable showers, extra guides to carry your gear, set up tents and make your food. (Or why not just rough it like the rest of us?) For adults, prices range from $325 tp $895 for two- to six-day classic trips; for children, $215 to $595. Kayak, canoe and gear rental is available. www.canoe.co.nz, ☎ 06-385-8197 or 0800-322-388, fax 06-385-8492.

On Foot

Off the Ohakune Mountain Road are a number of walking tracks, including the Mangawhero Forest Walk. A new walking track, developed in 2000, this easy three-km (not even two miles) walk takes just an hour and follows the Mangawhero River.

The track to Waitonga Falls is a little longer, at four km (2½ miles) and just over an hour, but the reward is a beautiful waterfall.

On Bikes

Scenic Cycle Rides offers the Ohakune Mountain Road Ride, 17 km (10½ miles) downhill, on a paved road. It takes two hours, including the drive up. Ruatihi Downhill, 21 km (13 miles) downhill, paved, three hours, including the drive back. They transport you up; you end back at Ruatihi Domain for a picnic. sceniccycle@xtra.co.nz, 16 Miro Street, ☎ 06-385-8257 or 021-607-294.

In the Air

Ohakune Scenic Flights around Mounts Tongariro, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu from 15 to 35 minutes. Cost begins at $55 per person. Ohakune Airfield, ☎ 06-385-9173

◆ Where to Stay

Hobbit Motor Lodge and Restaurant has that alpine ski-area feel to it. Very lovely setting and modern facilities with studio, en-suite bathroom, two-bedroom and lodge rooms. There is a restaurant on-site. www.thehobbit.co.nz, corner Goldfinch and Wye Streets, ☎ 06-385-8248, fax 06-385-8515 ($-$$).

Powderhorn Chateau is the ski resort of choice. Go there and you'll know you're in an alpine village. The definite draws include nice rooms, good restaurants, a sun bed and an indoor heated pool. www.powderhorn.co.nz, bottom of Mountain Road, ☎ 06-385-8888, fax 06-385-8925 ($$$).

Comfortable, clean and dependable is Acacia Lodge. www.acacialodgemotel.co.nz, 4 Moore Street, ☎ 06-385-8729 ($$).

For backpackers, try Matai Lodge where there are doubles, twins and dorms. www.matailodge.co.nz, at the corner of Clyde and Rata, ☎ 06-385-9169 ($).

Ohakune Top 10 Holiday Park is in a pleasant tree-lined area, just a short walk to shops and town. Cabins, units with kitchen and bath, and motel units. www.ohakune.net.nz, 5 Moore Street, ☎/fax 06-385-8561 or 0800-825-825 ($-$$).

◆ Where to Eat

There are takeout places, kebabs, all the usual food in Ohakune and also a few spots that stand out.

Utopia Café & Wine Bar has good food for breakfast and lunch as well as dependable, tasty coffee. Clyde Street ($).

Matterhorn Restaurant and The Powderkeg (or "the Keg") are both at the Powderhorn Chateau and are the place to be for après ski and good food. The Matterhorn is the fine dining option, and the Powderkeg is more relaxed. At the corner of Mangawhero and Thames Street, ☎ 06-385-8888.

Mountain Rocks Café & Bar is a good choice for breakfast, lunch and dinner. A new restaurant with a happy attitude. Corner Clyde & Goldfinch, ☎ 06-385-8295 ($$).

Hawke's Bay

Introduction

Many tourists miss the Hawke's Bay region. It has a Mediterranean climate, stunning scenery and lots of sunshine. You may only have time to explore part of the region. Most first-time visitors are interested in the area around the Art Deco city of Napier with its wine tourism, mainland gannet colony and National Aquarium. Note that the body of water is called "Hawke Bay." The region is called "Hawke's Bay."

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Getting Here 163
- Information Sources 164
- Napier, Hastings & Havelock North 164
  - Information 165
  - Adventures 166
  - Sightseeing 171
  - Where to Stay 171
  - Where to Eat 173

Getting Here

◆ By Air

Hawke's Bay airport is just north of Napier and is serviced domestically. The Airport Shuttle meets most flights and can be booked in advance at ☎ 06-870-9050.

◆ By Car

From Auckland to Napier, it is a five-hour drive; from Rotorua, three to four hours; from Gisborne, three hours; and from Wellington, four hours.

◆ By Bus

InterCity Coachlines, www.intercitycoach.co.nz, ☎ 09-913-6100, and Newman's, www.newmanscoach.co.nz, ☎ 09-613-6200, provide service from most areas of the North Island to Hawke's Bay. Buses arrive at the Napier Travel Centre at the train station on Munro Street.

Information Sources

Hawke's Bay Tourism maintains www.hawkesbaynz.com as the official website. Information centers are located around the region and they are listed at appropriate spots in this chapter.

Napier, Hastings & Havelock North

Hawke Bay & Te Mata Peak

The Maori were living a rich agricultural and fishing lifestyle in the Napier area along the coast, south of Wairoa, when Cook arrived on the *Endeavour*. They hadn't always lived peaceably, though, as the Battle of Te Pakake testifies. The local tribes in the area, Ngati Parau, Ngati Hinepare and Ngati Mahu, used Te Pakake Island – a low, sandy island just offshore where the present port is – as a pa (a fighting place or stronghold) and as a burial ground. What happened at the battle is unclear, but it appears that several warrior tribes from the Waikato attacked those who were taking refuge on the island and defeated them, capturing some of the chiefs.

It would be nearly impossible to visit Napier and not be aware of the Art Deco influence. On February 3, 1931 at 10:46 an earthquake registering 7.9 on the Richter scale shook Napier and the surrounding area for 2½ minutes. It was followed by over 500 aftershocks! Nearly all the buildings in Napier were destroyed and 258 people were killed. Soon after the earthquake, a fire swept through Napier, destroying some of what the earthquake hadn't and creating more havoc. During the shaking and twisting, the land changed form. Parts of the coastline fell to the sea, and the whole area tilted upwards, rising two meters (over six feet) from its previous level. The Ahuriri lagoon drained, creating 9,000 acres of new land.

Architects from Napier and around New Zealand were enlisted to redesign the city and, while Art Deco seems to garner the most attention, the other styles of the 1930s – Classical and Spanish Mission – are also evident. Napier is the one place in the world where you can see so many examples of these styles in one area.

The enterprising New Zealanders transported the fallen-down building bits to the sea front and created Marine Parade. It's two km long (about a mile and a quarter) and is a lovely place to stroll – either on the sand, or the walkway. Or you can roller blade along the pavement and, at the northern end, you'll find the bronze statue of Pania of the Reef. She is a character from a Maori legend – Pania was one of the sea people, but came to live on land with her lover/husband. The sea kept calling her, though, and one night she swam back to her sea people, who took her back (against her will) to the watery realm and away from her lover.

◆ Information Sources

Napier Information Centre, info@napiervic.co.nz, 100 Marine Parade, ☎ 06-834-1911, fax 06-835-7219.

Tip: *You can make on-line reservations at www.napiervic.co.nz.*

◆ Adventures

In Art

Sign up for an Art-Deco walk. It's a fascinating walk around town. Choose between the one-hour morning walk or two-hour afternoon

1. Mahia Beach & Scenic Reserve
2. Morere Hot Springs
3. Te Reinga Falls
4. Lake Waikareiti & Maungapohatu Tracks
5. Lake Waikaremoana Track
6. Esk River Area Wineries
7. Napier Attractions: Art Deco District, Marine Parade (Marineland, Opossum World), Centennial & Sunken Gardens, Ocean Spa, National Aquarium of NZ, Seahorse Farm, Silky Oak Chocolate Co., Hawke's Bay Museum, Te Puna Farm (Puketapu)
8. Napier Area Wineries
9. Hastings Attractions: Sunday Farmers Market, Splash Planet, Rush Monro Ice Cream Garden, Hawke's Bay Exhibition Centre, British Car Museum
10. Cape Kidnappers Gannet Colony
11. Te Mata Peak & Trust Park
12. Hastings Area Wineries
13. Winery Tours, Bike Tours, Dartmoor Area Wineries
14. Prinsy's Rural Experience, Sheepshearing
15. Te Angiangi Marine Reserve
16. Historic Farm Walks, "Tamatea's Hill"
17. Historic Farmstead
18. Dannevirke & Norsewood Attractions: Norsewood Pioneer Cottage Museum, Norsewear NZ Natural Clothing, Dannevirke Holiday Park, Dannevirke Aerodrome-GoJump

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walk. You can self-guide with a brochure from the trust, but on the guided walk you will learn more than you can imagine in a short time and for only $8-$10. www.artdeconapier.com, Deco Centre, Tennyson Street, Napier, ☎ 06-835-0022, fax 06-835-1912.

On Water

The beach along Marine Parade is not safe for swimming but, if you go out past the port, you'll find good swimming. Also, swimming and surfing are popular at Ocean Beach and Waimarama, southeast of Hastings. The drive to these spots takes you past Te Mata Peak and winds around hillsides, past wineries and farms. The views are great and the beaches popular.

Ocean Spa is a heated pool complex right on the ocean with private spa pools and massage available. It's a great place whether or not you've got kids, but particularly so if you do. Open Monday-Saturday 6 am-10 pm, Sunday 8 am-10 pm. $6 adults, $4 children. napier@h2omanagement.co.nz, 42 Marine Parade, Napier, ☎ 06-835-8553.

On Foot

Te Mata Trust Park walking tracks through native and exotic bush range from five minutes to two hours, some with great views of the area. At Te Mata Peak, 399 meters (about 1,300 feet), there's a lookout, and on clear days you can't quite see forever, but close to it. Pick up a map at the information center in Havelock North or Napier.

On Bikes

Bike D'Vine has a number of winery and sightseeing options – including an Art Deco trip – for touring around. Their trips concentrate on the Esk Valley and Napier. They provide you with the bike, helmet, lunch-pack and map, and will pick you up from your accommodation if you want. Single and tandems available and they also have scooters for rent. $30-$40 per day depending on the trip. www.bikedevine.com, 8 Brewster Street, Bluff Hill, ☎ 06-833-6697, fax 06-833-6687.

On Yer Bike, seven km south of Hastings, focuses on the wineries around the Ngatarawa Triangle – including Selini Estate, Ngatarawa and Trinity Hill. They have tandems and mountain bikes and provide maps, lunch-pack, and mobile phone. www.onyerbike.co.nz, 129 Rosser Road, Hastings, ☎ 06-879-8735.

Don't Miss This

Cape Kidnappers is home to over 20,000 Australasian gannets, making it the world's largest mainland nesting spot for this type of booby. Gannets are incredible. Not only are they breathtakingly beautiful, with their blue eyes and yellow heads (more vibrant during breeding season), and are amazing from a biological standpoint as well. When gannets feed, they soar 10 to 30 meters (32-100 feet) above the water looking for fish, then fold their wings and dive in with incredible speed. Inflatable air sacs on their neck and breast cushions the impact when diving. The cape is closed to the public during breeding season (June to October).

The National Aquarium of New Zealand is a fascinating place and I definitely recommend taking a guided behind-the-scenes tour – it gives you an up-close and personal experience, allowing touching, feeling and smelling. Open 9 am-5 pm from Easter to December 26; longer hours over Christmas holidays from February 1 through Easter. Behind-the-scene tours at 9 am and 1 pm; feeding in reef tank, 10 am; feeding in ocean tank, 2 pm. Dive in the main tank by appointment only. General admission $12 adults, $6 children; behind-the-scene adults, $20, $10 children. Diving, $40 plus $5 per tank. www.nationalaquarium.co.nz, Marine Parade, ☎ 06-834-1404, fax 06-833-7631.

Guided Options

Gannet Beach Adventures provides tractor-drawn trailer transport to the reserve. Trips go along the coastline and departure times vary depending on tides. You have about 90 minutes at the Cape to walk to the plateau, have a picnic or a swim. Along the way, you'll travel at the base of (somewhat unstable) cliffs, see earthquake faults, and have a laugh or two before getting to the DoC shelter, from which you walk (about 20 minutes) to the colony. $28, adults, $19 children. www.gannets.com, ☎ 06-875-0898 or 0800-426-638.

Gannet Safaris is into 4WD comfort trips that travel over Summerlee station, a large working beef and cattle station, and through Cape Kidnappers Golf Course on the way to the gannets. This is a good option for those who don't want to do the walk to the colony. They offer two trips per day, at 9:30 am and 1:30 pm. These folks also offer half-day and full-day guided walks and horse treks. www.gannetsafaris.com, Summerlee Station, ☎ 06-875-0888 or 0800-427-232, fax 06-875-0893.

In the Air

An iconic activity of Hawke's Bay is touring by balloon with Early Morning Balloons Ltd. Flights are one hour, the trip is four hours total. $250 adults, $160 children. www.early-am-balloons.co.nz, ☎ 06-879-4229 or 025-445-645.

In Golf

There are quite a few golf courses around the region, but the one that stands out is Cape Kidnappers Golf Course. Opened in early 2004, designed by Tom Doak and owned by Julian and Josephine Robertson (who also own Kauri Cliffs), this place is, frankly, spectacular, sitting on the peninsula that is home to the Cape Kidnappers gannet colony. You can't get a more gorgeous location to swing a club. At 480 meters elevation (about 1,560 feet), when you play toward the

sea it looks as if you're playing into the sea; when you turn, you are playing into sheep and a cattle station. www.capekidnappers.com, ☎ 06-875-1900.

With Wine

There is no denying it – Hawke's Bay is a food and wine lover's paradise and the region has embraced food and wine tourism with open arms. Hawke's Bay is the third-largest wine-producing region in New Zealand, and varieties range from Chardonnay, Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Gewurztraminer and Pinot Gris to Syrah, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. Other varieties are also planted in small quantities and wineries often produce dessert wines as well. About the food, well, just about every kind of fruit and vegetable you can imagine is grown here.

Pick up copies of the Wine Country Food Trail and Guide to the Wineries.

Festival: *Harvest Hawke's Bay is the annual food and wine celebration and is held in late January or early February each year. There is wine, food, entertainment, and bus transport between the participating wineries. www.harvesthawkesbay.co.nz, ☎ 0800-442-946.*

My Favorite Wineries

Mission Estate, near Napier, is a must, if not for the great wine, then for the extraordinary setting, building and history. It's been going since 1851; in 1910, the building was moved to its present site, something you can't really appreciate until you see the place. Open 8:30 am to 5:30 pm Monday to Saturday; 11 am to 4 pm on Sunday. Corner of Avenue and Church roads, Taradale, ☎ 06-845-9350.

Out on Puketapu Road is Moana Park, a relaxed, friendly, young and hip place. This is the kind of winery where you want to hang out and have a yarn with the owner who's pouring your wine. Open Labour Weekend to Easter, 11 am-5 pm daily, Easter to Labour Weekend, by appt. 530 Puketapu Road, Taradale, ☎ 06-844-8269, http://moanapark.tiz.co.nz.

Kim Crawford Wines consistently turns out great wine at affordable prices. Open 11 am to 6 pm daily in the summer, 11 am to 5 pm Saturday, Sunday and Monday in the winter. Clifton Road, Te Awanga, ☎ 06-875-0553.

Just about next door in Te Awanga is Clearview Estate. In addition to very drinkable wines, they have a lovely indoor/outdoor restaurant. 194 Clifton Road, ☎ 06-875-0150.

Outside of Havelock North is Te Mata Estate, one of the oldest and most respected wineries in New Zealand. They make outstanding wine. Te Mata Road, ☎ 06-877-4399.

Craggy Range Winery grows grapes in Marlborough, Martinborough, and Hawkes Bay. Their spectacular "cellar door" tasting facility is not too far from Te Mata Estate; you can taste a wide range of their fine wines and have a tour – by appointment. Open daily, 10 am to 6 pm. 253 Waimarama Road, ☎ 06-873-0141.

Selini Estate is a "don't miss" winery. Great wine, wine education, culinary school and a fabulous gourmet-food store. 2016 Maraekakaho Road, ☎ 06-879-8768.

GUIDED OPTIONS

Bay Tours and Charters operate daily wine tours around the region. www.baytours.co.nz, ☎ 06-843-6953.

Vicky's Wine Tours has full- and half-day tours, and a VIP trip with all the extras. They also have an option with lunch supplied. www.vickyswinetours.co.nz, ☎ 06-843-9991.

In Food

Don't miss the Sunday Farmers Market. What you will find depends on the season. This is the first farmers market in New Zealand. Hawke's Bay Showgrounds, Kenilworth Road, Hastings.

Make a stop at the Silky Oaks Chocolate Company. Their handmade chocolates are great and they also make a chocolate drink called "Hot Chocolate Extreme" that is out of this world. Monday-Thursday, 9 am-5 pm; Friday 9 am-3.30 pm; weekends and holidays, 10:30 am-3:30 pm. www.silkyoakchocs.co.nz, 1131 Link Road, Napier, ☎ 06-845-0908.

◆ Sightseeing

I really enjoy the Hawke's Bay Museum in Napier – they have great art and a fabulous Maori taonga collection (taonga = treasures) as well as lovely textiles. There are special stories about the region and survivor stories from the earthquake – four people describe their experiences in a 35-minute film. Definitely a worthwhile stop. Open daily, 9 am-5 pm in the winter, 9 am-6 pm in summer. $7.50 adults, children free. 65 Marine Parade, Napier, ☎ 06-835-7781.

There are countless artists and artisans in the region. Pick up a copy of the *Hawke's Bay Art Trail* – and then follow the numbers, visiting potters, jewelers, painters and more.

◆ Where to Stay

Napier

The County Hotel is in a restored Edwardian building and is the nicest hotel in town. It was built in 1909 for the county council and survived the 1931 earthquake. Each room is themed with a different native bird. www.countyhotel.co.nz, 12 Browning Street, Napier, ☎ 06-835-7800 or 0800-843-468 ($$$-$$$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Per room, double occupancy	
$	under NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$101-$175
$$$$	over NZ$175

The Masonic Hotel is Napier's "original" Art Deco Hotel and encompasses the Backpackers at Rosies as well as The Governors Inn.

www.masonic.co.nz, 47 Tennyson Street, ☎ 06-835-8689, fax 06-835-2297 ($-$$$).

Archie's Bunker Backpackers is a big, sprawling place that sleeps 50, but there is plenty of room to spread out. It's been recently refurbished, has two lounges and is well-kept. Right across from the museum. www.archiesbunker.co.nz, 14 Herschell Street, ☎ 06-833-7990 or 0800-272-4437, fax 06-833-7665 ($).

The biggest backpacker hostel in town is in an Art Deco-style former hotel that's right in the center of town. It's big and roomy and there are plenty of common areas to spread out. New owners took over since I last stayed there, but they are just as nice and friendly. cribac@yahoo.com, 48 Emerson Street, ☎ 06-835-2059 ($).

Napier Prison Backpackers in the oldest prison in New Zealand. It opened in 1862 and closed in 1993. Now you can sleep there in dorms, singles, doubles and twins. Free Internet, laundry, tea and coffee. www.napierprison.com, 55 Coote Road, Napier, ☎ 06-835-9933 or 021-114-4991 ($).

Outside of Napier

For a farm stay, go to Te Puna Farm. I'm probably prejudiced, because Sarah and Tony are my adopted "kiwi parents" and their place is great. It's very relaxing and comfortable; you can do as much on the farm as you like or as little. Sarah's a wonderful cook who loves vegetables as much as I do and they've walked just about everywhere in New Zealand, so if you're a tramper, they'll have some good advice. www.farmstaynapier.co.nz, 301 Appley Road, Puketapu, ☎ 06-844-8753 ($$)

Te Awanga Holiday Park is right on the beach. There are sites for tents and campers and a few cabins and serviced units. 52 Kuku Street, Te Awanga, ☎ 06-875-0334 ($-$$).

Ahuriri

I really like Ahuriri as a base for exploring the region. It's away from the traffic of Napier and has quite a few restaurants, bars and cafés within very easy walking distance.

The Anchorage Motor Lodge is new and overlooks the marina. The rooms have bath and kitchen, balconies and most have spa baths. Very good value. www.anchorage.net.nz, 26 West Quay, ☎ 06-834-4318 or 0800-422-266, fax 06-834-3010 ($$-$$$).

Another fine option is Harbour View Motor Lodge, set right on the sea. Rooms have balconies and there's only grass between the

building and the water. 60 Nelson Quay, ☎ 06-834-8077 or 0800-668-432, fax 06-835-8077 ($$$).

Portside Inn Backpackers is simple budget accommodation in Ahuriri. It's new and is just a couple of minutes walk from the beach and cafés. www.portsideinn.co.nz, 52 Bridge Street, ☎ 06-833-7292, fax 06-833-7291 ($).

◆ Where to Eat

Many of the wineries have restaurants and all that I have been to have been great.

Napier

If you want to impress someone, you go to Mission Restaurant. The food is so beautiful, you just may want to look at it, though, and not eat it. 198 Church Road, ☎ 06-844-6048 ($$$).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée	
$	under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$21-$30
$$$$	over NZ$30

Chambers Restaurant at the County Hotel has great food and is probably the best choice for a more formal restaurant in Napier. 12 Browning Street, Napier, ☎ 06-835-7800 ($$$).

You'll know Caffe Arroma, because of the Vespa bikes sitting outside. Good coffee and light meals. 20 Dalton Street, ☎ 06-835-3922 ($-$$).

Raffles Café is my favorite choice for lunch. Fantastic salads and innovative food. The only problem is deciding which one you want. Also, important to me, they have a good pile of magazine. Fine wine list, too. On Raffles Street ($-$$).

After Raffles, Sappho & Heath is my choice for a café. 222 Emerson Street, ☎ 06-834-3933 ($-$$).

Ahuriri

There's wood-fired pizza and good lunches at Shed 2, which becomes a night club after hours. West Quay, ☎ 06-835-2202 ($$-$$$).

Hep Set Mooch is very retro, very 1960s. No cell phones are allowed at the counter and you have to like them for that. Great coffee, lunch and breakfast. Open 9 am-3 pm. In the Kiwi Adventures building. ☎ 06-833-6332 ($).

Provedore is a bit more posh with good food and sleek surroundings. 60 west Quay, Ahuriri, ☎ 06-834-0189 ($$-$$$).

Manawatu

Introduction

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Getting Here 175
- Information Sources 176
- State Highway 1 176
- Horowhenua 177
- Palmerston North 177

Bordered by the Rangiteki and Manawatu Rivers, the Ruahine Ranges and the Tasman Sea, the Manawatu is a fertile agricultural area and deservedly proud of its rural heritage. And, while not home to any of New Zealand's Great Walks, the Manawatu is a wonderful place to get out and explore the bush. Pick up a copy of *Walks in the Manawatu* from the information center. This handy little book describes dozens of local walks.

The narrow Manawatu Gorge stretches for 10 km (six miles) between Woodville on the east to Ashhurst on the west. The Maori named the Manawatu Gorge *Te Apiti* (the narrow passage), and the river *Te Au-Rere-a-Te-Tonga* (the rushing current of the south). It was an important river to the Maori, as it afforded a low-level route to cross from one side of the ranges to the other. Today, the river and gorge provide recreation and sightseeing.

Getting Here

◆ By Air

Palmerston North International Airport is five km (three miles) northeast of the central business district. www.pnairport.co.nz, ☎ 06-351-4415.

Air New Zealand and Origin Pacific connect Palmerston North with the rest of New Zealand and Freedom Air has low-cost direct flights to the Australian cities of Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney.

◆ By Train

The Capital Connection, a commuter service, links Palmerston North with Wellington, leaving at 8:20 in the morning and returning in the afternoon. You can reach them at ☎ 04-498-3000, extension 44324.

The train station is on Matthews Ave.

◆ By Car

Half-way between Taupo and Wellington, Manawatu is easily reached by car and all state highways in the region lead directly to Palmerston North. It's two hours to Wellington (take SH1 to 57), two hours to Hawkes Bay (SH3 and SH2), two hours to Wairarapa (SH2) and just over an hour to Wanganui (SH3).

◆ By Bus

Palmerston North is a bit of a hub for InterCity Coachlines and Newmans, with connections in all directions, and White Star stops at Palmerston North on its runs between Wellington and New Plymouth. The City Bus Terminal is at the corner of Main and Pitt Streets and buses can be booked through the information center. Buses also have arrivals and departures at Bulls and Sanson; InterCity and Newman's service Feilding.

Information Sources

Visit Destination Manawatu at www.manawatunz.co.nz.

State Highway 1

The town of Bulls, where SH1 and SH3 intersect, is about 20 km (12 miles) north of Horowhenua. Bulls is an Air Force town and beside it is Ohakea – New Zealand's major Air Force base. At Ohakea is the hands-on Air Force Museum. There are lots of buttons to push, ejector seats to sit in, and flight simulators to try. It's unusual to have a museum so close to a working Air Force base; you can sit in the Crew Room Café and watch the airplanes come and go. There's also an Air Force and aviation gift shop. Open seven days a week, 9:30 am to 4 pm. $8 adults, $3 children, under five free. www.airforcemuseum.co.nz, ☎ 06-351-5020.

Horowhenua

Horowhenua is the region extending from Himatangi to Waikawa Beach on the coast and inland to include Tokomaru through Levin. There are some nice beaches and plenty of farmstands where you can pick up some freshly picked produce.

The visitor information center in Foxton is at The Tram Station (☎ 06-363-8940) and beside it is Café Espresso – great coffee and you can catch up on your e-mail.

In Levin, visit the Horowhenua Visitor Information Centre, visitorinfor@horowhenua.govt.nz, 93 Oxford Street, ☎ 06-367-8440.

◆ Adventures

On Water

The dune field at Himatangi Beach is New Zealand's largest. The town is a simple summer beach community. Pick up some food to eat at the beach or take a walk – in fact, you can walk all the way to Foxton.

There's fishing at the river mouth in Foxton and there are also beaches to visit at Waitarere and Hokio.

On Horses

Between Levin and Foxton, turn toward the sea for Waitarere Beach and Black Forest Horse Treks, where you can take a one- to two-hour ride through the forest, farmland, sand dunes and onto the beach. ☎ 06-368-7878 021-128-2134

Eco-Tours

The Manawatu Estuary is also in Foxton and well worth a stop. It's an important migratory destination for many Arctic birds – godwit, red knot and Pacific golden plover. Annually, 38 species and 3,000 birds visit the estuary. Follow the signs for the Manawatu Estuary.

Palmerston North

Palmerston North is the business center for Manawatu and is about 30 minutes east of Bulls on State Highway 3. Farming in the

area spurred the development of the town, which began subdivision in 1866. The current population is roughly 75,000 and a third is aged between the ages of 15 and 30. Probably the biggest claim to fame for Palmerston North is as the home of Massey University, which began as an agricultural college in 1927 and expanded to a full university in 1963. Palmerston North is also home to Te Wananga O Aotearoa (offering university education within a Maori-based environment) and International Pacific College.

Palmerston North was once called The Rose City.

◆ Information Sources

Manawatu Visitor Information Center is at the northeastern quadrant of The Square in Palmerston North, manawatu-info@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 06-354-6593, fax 06-356-9841.

The Department of Conservation is at 717 Tremaine Ave., ☎ 06-358-9004.

◆ Adventures

On Water

Manawatu Gorge Adventures offers half-day guided kayak trips in the Manawatu Gorge through the mostly Grade II rapids on a nine-km (almost six-mile) trip. $65 per person. Full-day and overnight paddles on the Rangitikei River are also available. www.teamtactix.co.nz, ☎ 027-447-4025 or 0800-746-025.

Adventure Jet blasts its jet-boats through the high-sided canyon of the Manawatu Gorge. Adults $55, children $35 (under 12 years). Trips must be booked in advanced and can be arranged by

contacting www.adventurejet.co.nz, ☎/fax 06-377-2114 or 025-464-664.

Did you know? *The Manawatu is one of only two rivers in the world that starts on one side of a mountain range and enters the sea on the other? And it's the only one that does it east-to-west.*

On Foot

Maps for walks are available at the information centers.

The Manawatu Gorge Walk is along the side of the river and takes about four hours one-way; you can walk it from either the Ashurst or the Woodville end. It's a good idea to arrange transport back to your car if you're not keen on retracing your steps. There is a half-hour loop option, as well.

On Wheels

For adventures on four wheels, give Go4Wheels a call. Located just east of the Manawatu Gorge, these trips travel across farm tracks to the top of the Tararuas and up to the Tararua Wind Farm. Prices range from $55 for a one-hour river or farm ride to $65 for a wind farm trip. Bookings essential. Gorge Road, ☎ 06-376-7136 or 027-278-7362.

Another option is Tararua 4x4's Offroad Adventures. Prices for trips around high-country working farms and the Tararua Ranges begin at $50 per person and there is a minimum of two people. Pick up point is at Beyond the Bridge Café. Contact the Corlett's at tararua4x4@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 06-357-1713, 021-630-487 or 025-601-5571.

◆ Sightseeing

The Tararua Wind Farm is the largest wind farm in the Southern Hemisphere. Getting to it can be a bit daunting, but the views are rewarding. Drive through the Manawatu Gorge, across the Ballance Bridge and turn right on Hall Block

Road. It's about a six-km (four-mile) climb through private property, so be mindful of signs and closed gates. This is a very narrow, steep and windy gravel road and you'll need to watch out for other cars, quad bikes, livestock and walkers. There are few passing areas, so you may need to reverse.

Did you know? *New Zealand produces 29% of its electricity through renewable resources – more than any developed other country. Most comes from hydroelectricity, but wind farms are starting to become more common.*

Te Manawa is the only regional museum in New Zealand to weave together three disciplines – museum, art gallery and science center. Te Manawa aims to teach children that museums aren't stuffy places and science centers are not just for people with superior intellect. The museum, specializing in the history, art and culture of the region, has a permanent Maori display and a changing collection of artifacts from "other peoples." Open 10 am-5 pm, every day but Christmas. www.temanawa.co.nz, 396 Main Street, ☎ 06-355-5000, fax 06-358-3552.

◆ Where to Stay

A good bed & breakfast option is Udys on Anders, just six minutes from the CBD. Tim and Glenda Udy farmed dairy, beef and sheep before moving here, closer to town. They are a wealth of local knowledge and very easy to talk to. The kitchen in the unit is complete, or you can arrange meals with the family. kiwitim@clear.net.nz, 52 Anders Road, ☎ 06-354-1722 or 027-409-299, fax 06-354-1711 ($$$).

Only 50 meters (160 feet) to the Regent Theatre, Consolidated Mid-City Motel is the closest to town and has very affordable rooms, as well as a spa pool and gym. www.midcity-motel.com, 129 Broadway, ☎ 06-357-2184 or 0800-666-400, fax 06-359-0777 ($$).

The Empire Hotel has recently undergone major renovations. It is in an attractive old building with three bars, food and accommodation at the corner of Princess and Main streets, ☎ 06-357-8002 ($$).

Cornwall Motor Lodge has 27 units, all with spa baths and kitchen. www.cornwallmotorlodge.co.nz, 101 Fitzherbert Avenue, ☎ 06-354-9010 or 0800-170-000, fax 06-356-8119 ($$-$$$).

The Rose City Motel has studios, one- to two-bedrooms and suites. Breakfast is available, not to mention a spa pool and squash courts. www.rosecitymotel.co.nz, 120 Fitzherbert Avenue, ☎ 06-356-5388, fax 06-356-5085 ($$$).

The Peppertree YHA is a smaller, cozier option with a nice lounge and piles of videotapes to watch. Clean and friendly, they have dorms, doubles and family rooms. peppertreehostel@clear.net.nz, 121 Grey Street, ☎ 06-355-4054, fax 06-355-4063 ($).

The Palmerston North Holiday Park is in a park-like setting at the edge of Victoria Esplanade, with tourist flats, cabins and tent sites. www.holidayparks.co.nz/palmerstonnorth, 133 Dittmer Drive, ☎/fax 06-358-0349 ($-$$).

◆ Where to Eat

The café strip on George Street is the place to be on Saturday night and a good spot for "Sunday Morning Strolling." Among others, check out George Street Delicatessen, and Moxis (great smoothies and breakfast) ($-$$$).

Don't miss The Gourmet's Pantry for a light snack or to pick up food for cooking later. A great place to get unusual ingredients from around New Zealand and the world. 366 Church Street, ☎ 06-355-1199 ($).

At the corner of Broadway and Princess is The Bath House, one of the city's nicest restaurants. A sliding roof over the courtyard allows for year-round al fresco dining. Lovely menu and professional service. Music on Thursday and Friday. 161 Broadway, ☎ 06-355-0051 ($$$).

For gourmet pizza, try Pompeii, open seven nights a week, 198 The Square, ☎ 06-359-0059 ($$).

Wellington & Hutt Valley
1. Staglands Wildlife Reserve, H2O Xtream, Hutt River Trail, Lighthouse Cinema & Café
2. Maori Treasure, Dowse Art Museum
3. Rimutaki Forest Park
4. Belmont Regional Park
5. Rimutaki Incline, Mt. Climbie, Pakuratahi Forest, Tunnel Gully
6. Fly By Wire, Queen Elizabeth Park, Wellington Tramway Museum
7. Southward Car Museum, Coastlands Shopping Centre, Kapiti 4X4, Emudale, Kapiti Aero Club, Lindale Centre
8. Kapiti Island Nature Reserve
9. Waikane River Walkway, Ferndale Equestrian Centre, Nga Manu Nature Reserve, Tararua Outdoor Recreation Centre, Aotaki Homestead
10. Te Wananga O Raukawa (the Maori University), Otaki Gorge, Otaki Forks, Tararua Range
11. Plantation Forest & Bird Sanctuary
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
Foxton
56
To Palmerston North
11
1
57
Levin
1
10
Otaki
Te Horo
Otaki R.
Tararua Forest Park
7
8
Waikanae
9
Parapa-raumu
Mangahao R.
6
SEA CAT FERRY
Paekakariki
Upper Hutt
1
2
Featherston
Paremata
58
5
Mana Island Scenic Reserve
4
Lower Hutt
Stokes Valley
Lake Wairarapa
53
Cook Strait
2
Wellington
1
3
Days Bay
FERRY
Orongorongo R.
Martinborough
Palliser Bay
Lake Ferry
Haurangi Forest Park
White Rock
25 KM
15.5 MILES
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Wellington

Introduction

Wellington isn't just the national capital. It's a hilly harbor town with great food, lots of museums and galleries and fantastic outdoor adventures. The San Francisco of New Zealand, Wellington sits on an earthquake fault, has some impossibly windy days and is home to Te Papa (the Museum of New Zealand), The Royal New Zealand Ballet and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. For theater, check out what's happening at the Westpac St. James Theatre and The Opera House. Tickets can be purchased through Ticketek, ☎ 04-384-3840

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Getting Here 184
- Information Sources 185
- Adventures 186
- Sightseeing 188
- Where to Stay 190
- Where to Eat 191
- Hutt Valley 192
- Wairarapa 196
- Martinborough 196
- Kapiti Coast 200

One of the worst disasters in New Zealand maritime history occurred during a ferocious storm just out of Wellington Harbour in 1968, when the passenger ferry Wahine *struck Barretts Reef and sank. Over 730 people were on the ship and 51 died. There is a fabulous movie at the Museum of Wellington City & Sea about the event.*

The discovery of Wellington Harbour is attributed to Polynesian explorer Kupe, who is believed to have arrived around the 10th century. Its first name was Te Upoko o te Ika a Maui, which means "The head of Maui's Fish," and refers to the Maori legend that Maui caught and pulled a fish to the surface, and that fish became the North Island.

Did you know? *The original waterfront was along what is now Lambton Quay. As you walk, look for plaques on the sidewalks marking the original shoreline. Reclamation of land began in 1852.*

The regional population is close to 400,000, but the city is compact – you can walk across Wellington in 20 minutes. There are plenty of

reasons to take your time and meander around its four quarters – Lambton, Willis, Cuba and Courtenay.

Inside advice: *Try to arrange your stay in Wellington over a weekend, when many of the accommodations offer better rates. And, if you have a car, a bike or a pair of feet, go to the lookout at the top of Mt. Victoria to get your bearings. It's a great view from up there!*

Getting Here

◆ By Water

Coming from the South Island, the Interisland Line operates a ferry service for foot and vehicle passengers and has a fleet of ships offering a variety of facilities, including bars, cafés, a children's play area and a movie theater. Interisland Line ferry prices are tiered, just like airlines, so it pays to book ahead. Fares for foot passengers begin at $39 one-way, vehicles at $144. Traveling from one island to the other takes about three hours and arrivals are at the Interisland terminal about two km (just over a mile) north of the rail station). Bookings can be made through information centers, www.interislandline.co.nz, or by calling ☎ 0800-802-802

The Blue Bridge Ferry also sails between the North and South Islands twice daily, offers foot and vehicle passage and arrives on Waterloo Quayl. It also has restaurants, bars and an entertainment center. Fares are set ($49 per adult, $169 per car). www.bluebridge.co.nz, or by calling ☎ 0800-844-844.

◆ By Air

Wellington International Airport is about eight km (five miles) southeast of the city. The Stagecoach Flyer services the airport through Upper Hutt. Contact the information center or Ridewell for schedules and routes, www.wrc.govt.nz, ☎ 04-801-7000. There are shuttle services that run between the airport and Wellington city center, plus plenty of taxis (although pricier than the shuttles). Try Metro Shuttle Service, ☎ 04-389-3669, or Super Shuttle, ☎ 0800-748-885.

Helpful hint: *Ridewell is the public transport information service for the region. They have information, timetables and fares for all sorts of transport around the region. ☎ 04-801-7000.*

◆ By Car

SH1, from the coast, and SH2, from Wairarapa, come together just north of the city. It's about five hours from Napier, five or six from Taupo, and nearly 12 from Auckland.

◆ By Bus

InterCity Coachlines and Newmans go to all North Island destinations and leave from platform nine at the rail station. Bookings can be made at the information center or through InterCity, www.intercity.co.nz, ☎ 04-472-5111, or Newmans, www.newmanscoach.co.nz, ☎ 04-499-3261.

White Star provides service to Wanganui, Palmerston North and New Plymouth. Contact them directly, ☎ 06-758-3338.

◆ By Train

The Wellington Rail Station is on Bunny Street, at the corner of Waterloo Quay.

The Capital Connection, a commuter service, links Palmerston North with Wellington. You can reach them at ☎ 04-498-3000, ext 44324.

Tranz Metro operates train services between Wellington and Wairarapa, stopping in Lower Hutt (about 25 minutes from Wellington) and Upper Hutt (about 50 minutes) along the way. It also has lines that go to Paraparaumu and Johnsonville. For information, contact Tranz Metro, ☎ 04-498-3000, ext 44993, or Ridewell, ☎ 04-801-7000.

Information Sources

Positively Wellington is the tourism organization and their website is www.wellingtonnz.com.

The Wellington Visitor Information Centre is on Wakefield Street, in a huge complex surrounding Civic Square. The main library is right beside it and there is a café and ex-

tensive gift shop within. Open seven days a week, shorter hours on weekends and holidays. ☎ 04-802-4860, fax 04-802-4863

Department of Conservation has a wonderful office in the Old Government Building, at the corner of Lambton Quay and Whitmore Street. If you are interested in visiting Kapiti Island (see page 201 below), you need to get your permits through this office. Open 9 am-4: 30 pm, Monday to Friday, 10 am-3 pm Saturday. ☎ 04-472-7356.

Adventures

◆ On Water

The beach on Oriental Parade is man-made? But it's definitely worth a dip in the water when the weather's warm.

For good pool swimming, go to Freyberg Pool, on Oriental Parade, just next to the beach

Rent kayaks from Ferg's Rock 'n Kayak and go for a paddle around the harbor. Ferg's also rents inline skates and has a climbing wall. www.fergskayaks.co.nz, Shed 6 Queens Wharf, ☎ 04-499-8898, fax 04-499-8896.

The Dominion Post Ferry crosses the harbor to Day's Bay eight times on week days and five on weekends. Three trips each day stop at Matiu/Somes Island, a reserve administered by DoC. There are walking paths around the island and it's a great little city escape. Day's Bay has Cobar, a trendy café, the Blue Penguin ice cream shop, and one of the best beaches around. $7.50 adults, $4 children. www.eastbywest.co.nz, ☎ 04-499-1282, for timetable ☎ 04-494-3339.

Matiu/Somes Island was New Zealand's main internment camp for enemy aliens during both WWI and WWII and has also been used as an animal quarantine station.

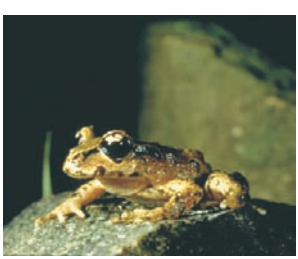
◆ On Foot

Wellington is a walker's city and there are countless places to stroll around. Go to the information center and pick up brochures for the walks below.

My favorite walking spot is in Mt. Victoria. There's a great collection of trails, including the northern end of the Southern Walkway.
The Northern Walkway starts at the Botanic Gardens and goes all the way to Johnsonville. It's about 14 km (nine miles) through regenerating forest and has a couple of good climbs.
The Wellington Writers Walk is a very cool thing. Pick up a guide at the information center or a museum and follow the route around the waterfront, reading quotes by some fine writers with Wellington connections.
Another favorite walk is all or part of the City to Sea Walkway. It begins on Bolton Street near Parliament and ends 12 km (seven miles) later in Island Bay. There is a very informative brochure available.

Guided option: *For a great introduction to the city, sign up with Walk Wellington. After a guided 90- to 120-minute experience, you will know more about the place than most residents. Prices range from $20 to $80. Contact Walk Wellington for details. Book at the visitor information center. www.wellingtonnz.com/walkwellington, ☎ 04-384-9590.*

◆ Watchable Wildlife



The Karori Wildlife Sanctuary is charitable community trust and is the world's first inner-city predator-free habitat. Home to many endangered species of birds, including the North Island saddleback, the Sanctuary is the first place where a little spotted kiwi hatched in the wild on mainland New Zealand in over 100 years. There are wheelchair-accessible paths, as well as over 35 km (21 miles) of walking and tramping tracks (up to eight hours), and you can either self-guide or book a tour. Open every day except Christmas. Winter hours are 10 am-4 pm, Monday to Friday; 10 am-5 pm, Saturday and Sunday and public holidays. Summer hours, 10 am-5 pm daily. $6 adults, $3 children, $15 family. Waiapu Road, www.sanctuary.org.nz, ☎ 04-920-9200, fax 04-920-9000

Sightseeing

Seal Coast Safari will get you out of the city and into the wilds in no time flat. Transportation is by 4x4 and trips follow the coast out to the Red Rocks and the seal colony at Sinclair Head. $59 per adult, $10 per child. www.sealcoast.com, ☎ 04-802-4860, 0800-732-527. Bookings essential. Pick-up is at the Visitor Information Centre on Wakefield Street.

Tip: *Nothing beats taking the Cable Car on a clear night. It's been running since 1902, connecting Lambton Quay with the Botanic Garden and the village of Kelburn. At the top of the run, you'll find Skyline Café, the gardens and the Planetarium. $3 round-trip, leaves every 10 minutes from 7 am to 10 pm, Monday to Friday, 8:30 am-10 pm, Saturday, and 9 am-10 pm, Sunday & public holidays. Cable Car Lane (next to McDonald's on Lambton Quay) or Upland Road, Kelburn. www.wellingtonnz.com/cablecar, ☎ 04-472-2199.*

The Cable Car stops at the entrance to the Wellington Botanic Garden. Set on over 60 acres, its plantings include roses, succulents, rhododendrons, you name it. There's also a begonia house. It's a wonderful place to wander around and spend a day. Main entrance on Glenmore Street.

I have to admit, when I was living in Wellington, I used to walk right past the Museum of Wellington City & Sea. And what a mistake that was. Built in 1892, the building is classified as a Category One ("special or outstanding historical or cultural heritage") by the Historic Places Trust. It originally housed the Queen's Bond, which means it served as a warehouse where all goods received from overseas were stored until duty was paid to the Queen. Feature films are shown every 40 minutes on the Tall Screen. Make sure you see *Tall Ships* and *Mountains to the Sea.*.This is a lovely, modern museum and now one of my favorites in New Zealand. Free admission. Queens Wharf. www.museumofwellington.co.nz, ☎ 04-472-8904, fax 04-496-1949.

Don't miss this: *No visit to Wellington is complete without a tour of Parliament. The tour takes you through the working areas of Parliament.*

If the debating chambers are in session, do not miss the chance to watch our politicians behaving like children. You don't have to know anything about New Zealand politics to be entertained by the heckling and yelling. Tours are free and begin hourly, from 10 am to 4 pm, Monday to Friday; 10 am-3 pm, Saturdays and public holidays. On Sundays, tours leave at 12, 1, 2 and 3 pm. Closed Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day and Waitangi Day. Corner Lambton Quay and Molesworth Streets. ☎ 04-471-9503.

Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa is the national museum of New Zealand and has interactive and static displays telling the history and stories of New Zealand, as well as a virtual bungy jump. There's a lot of history, including good displays on the Treaty of Waitangi. There is also quite a good Maori section and well-presented art displays. As with most good museums, the shop has a wonderful selection of gifts and art. Free admission. Cable Street. 10 am-6 pm every day, open until 9 pm on Thursday. www.tepapa.govt.nz, ☎ 04-381-7000.

Did you know? *New Zealand was the first country to give women the vote. Kate Shepard petitioned the house five times and finally, in 1892, had the necessary 30,000 signatures.*

Capital E is Wellington's children's museum. Lots of interactive stuff, including a TV studio. Just under the City to Sea Bridge. www.capitale.org.nz, ☎ 04-384-8502.

Guided Options

Hammond's Wellington Scenic Tours offers just that. Choose between 2½ hours around the city (departs at 10 am and 2 pm), four hours for the Kapiti Coast (departs at 9 am and 1:30 pm) or all day in the Wairarapa (departs at 9 am). Prices begin at $40 adults, $20 children. Pick up at your accommodation is available, or meet them at the information center on Wakefield Street or at the railroad station. www.wellingtonsightseeingtours.com, ☎ 04-472-0869, 04-528-2248, fax 04-471-1730.

The Lord of the Rings has certainly made its mark on Wellington. For a tour of locations used in the film, call Wellington Rover. Comfortable transportation, good lunch, and interesting commentary fill out

the full-day tour ($150). Wellington Rover also has a great loop trip around the bays, getting travelers out to some of the less accessible spots, including the Wellington Zoo, h2o sports (www.h2osports.co.nz, for windsurfing), the Chocolate Fish (one of the best cafés around!), the Miramar Links, Lyall Bay (rent a surfboard) and Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. You can also get off at Owhiro Bay and walk out to Red Rocks and the seal colony at Sinclair Head. Day passes are $35. Call for other trip options and book at the information center. www.wellingtonrover.co.nz, ☎ 021-426-211.

Wellington's City Circular Bus Service meanders around every 10 minutes, with pick-ups and drop-offs at the most popular inner-city attractions. A single ride is only $2 for adults, 50¢ for kids, or an all-day pass is $8. Look for the yellow bus. www.stagecoach.co.nz, ☎ 04-801-7000.

Where to Stay

Nestled beside Mt. Victoria is Booklovers B&B, where author/owner Jane Tolerton happily answers questions about Wellington and the rest of New Zealand. Single, twin and queen rooms are available, some with shared facilities. www.booklovers.co.nz, 123 Pirie Street, ☎ 04-384-2714 ($$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Per room, double occupancy	
$	under NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$101-$175
$$$$	over NZ$175

The Hotel Ibis is a reasonably priced, pleasant place to stay right in the heart of Wellington. Rooms are spacious and clean, the staff is friendly, and it's probably the best value in town. www.ibishotels.co.nz, 153 Featherston Street, ☎ 04-496-1880 ($$-$$$).

Handy to Te Papa, Oriental Parade and Courtenay Place is Museum Hotel – Hotel de Wheels. The building was originally across the street, but to make way for Te Papa, it was put on rails and wheeled across the street, hence the name. Pleasant, quiet rooms, interesting art in the lobby and beautiful patios that overlook the harbor. www.museumhotel.co.nz, 90 Cable Street, ☎ 04-802-2809 or 0800-994-335, fax 04-802-8909 ($$$$).

The Cambridge Hotel was originally built in 1930 and houses both hotel and backpacker accommodation. It proves you don't have to spend

a fortune when you stay in the city. www.cambridgehotel.co.nz, 28 Cambridge Terrace, ☎ 04-385-8829 or fax 04-385-2503 ($-$$).

The Wellington City YHA is in a great location, and offers a huge variety of accommodation. There are twins, doubles and quad shares with en-suite bathroom, and rooms with shared facilities; two gigantic kitchens and dining rooms. Linen is provided free of charge; the laundry facilities have Internet, TV and stereo. www.stayyha.com, 292 Wakefield Street, ☎ 04-801-7280, fax 04-801-7278 ($-$$).

Where to Eat

◆ Café Scene

Caffé L'Affare is one of the places for breakfast, especially on the weekends. They roast their own coffee and everyone seems to be a bit buzzed. 27 College Street, ☎ 04-385-9748 ($-$$).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée	
$	under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$21-$30
$$$$	over NZ$30

The Nikau Gallery and Café is in Civic Square and has breakfast, brunch and lunch options. It's a rather classy place with protected outdoor seating. City Gallery Building, Civic Square, ☎ 04-801-4168 ($$-$$).

Felix is a bit of an icon, a smart, hip diner with casual service that offers a major breakfast platter all day. 128 Wakefield Street, corner of Cuba Street, ☎ 04-499-5523 ($-$$).

Along Oriental Parade, there are two choices for brunch: Vista (for street-side watch-the-crowds dining), 106 Oriental Parade, ☎ 04-385-7724; and Parade Café (for a chill-out in the back patio), 148 Oriental Parade, ☎ 04-939-3935. Either way, you win with great food ($$).

When you're near Parliament, go into The Backbencher Pub & Café. The food is traditional New Zealand, all named after one Member of Parliament or another. Lunch or dinner. 34 Molesworth Street, Thorndon, ☎ 04-472-3065 ($$-$$$).

◆ For Something More Formal

There is only one choice for Northern Italian and it's Il Casino, a Wellington institution. Book ahead and bring your appetite. 108 Tory Street, corner of College, ☎ 04-385-7496 ($$$).

For an award-winning dinner, try Roxburgh Bistro at 18 Majoribanks Street, ☎ 04-385-7577, or its sister, the kid-friendly Café Bastille at 16 Majoribanks Street, ☎ 04-382-9559 ($$-$$$). Bouquet Garni is another "get in your good clothes" kind of place and is in a fabulous old building that used to house a bordello. Downstairs is a wine bar. 100 Willis Street, ☎ 04-499-1095 ($$$).

Hutt Valley

Looking across Wellington Harbour, the land you see on the other side is the beginning of the Hutt Valley. A bit of a bedroom community for the capital city, this is an option for spending a couple of days away from the usual tourist routes.

◆ Getting Here

By Boat

While often thought of as a Wellington tour, The Dominion Post Ferry is a good way to reach Day's Bay and the Hutt Valley. After arriving at Day's Bay, you can take a taxi to some of the other attractions in the area, then return to Wellington by train. $7.50 adults, $4 children. www.eastbywest.co.nz, ☎ 04-499-1282, for timetable call 04-494-3339.

By Train

Tranz Metro operates services between Wellington and Wairarapa, stopping in Lower Hutt (about 25 minutes from Wellington) and Upper Hutt (about 50 minutes) along the way. For information, contact Tranz Metro, ☎ 04-498-3000, ext 44993, or Ridewell, ☎ 04-801-7000.

By Car

The Hutt Valley is located on SH2, which is the main link between Wellington and Wairarapa. From Wellington, it's just about 20 minutes to Lower Hutt, 45 to Upper Hutt.

By Bus

Probably the best bus service from the Hutt Valley to Wellington is on the Stagecoach Flyer, which connects to the Wellington airport, making stops in the central city

along the way. Contact the information centers or Ridewell for schedules and routes. www.wrc.govt.nz, ☎ 04-801-7000.

◆ Information

Rimutaka Forest Park

In Lower Hutt, visit Hutt City Information and Visitors Centre at www.huttcity.info, 10 Andrews Avenue, ☎ 04-560-4715, fax 04-939-4716.

The Upper Hutt Visitor Information Centre, www.upperhuttcity.com, is located at 6 Main Street, ☎ 04-527-2141, fax 04-527-9818.

◆ Adventures

On Foot

If you're driving along SH2, you can't help but notice the Hutt River Trail. It stretches 24 km (15 miles), all the way from Petone to beyond Upper Hutt. Easy access, easy terrain, well-marked and with toilet stops!

The start of the Rimutaka Incline

The main entrance to Rimutaka Forest Park is just south of Lower Hutt, outside of Wainuiomata, along the Coast Road. There are great walking options here, and trampers can go to the Orongorongo River and camp. A small DoC information site is at the car park but, if you're coming from Wellington, I'd

pop into the DoC office there and pick up a map and brochure – opening hours are limited at the Rimutaka DoC.

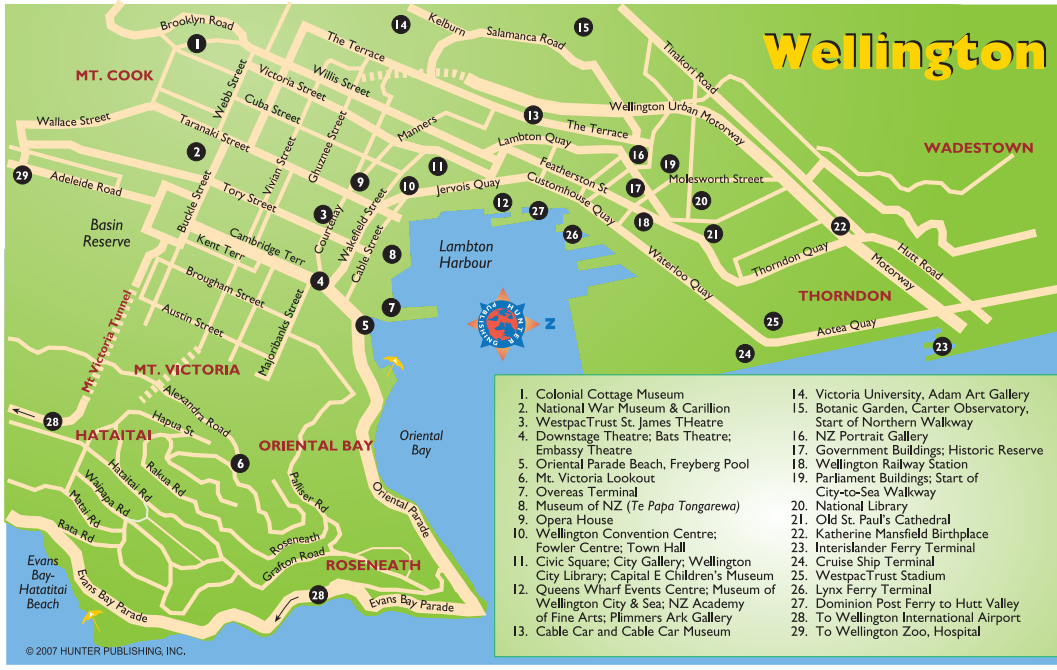
Belmont Regional Park is another good option for a couple of hours of exercise. I like the trail up to Korokoro Valley, the dam and Belmont Trig. This regional park has a few entrances, some easily serviced by public transport – contact Ridewell for information, ☎ 504-801-7000 or ask at the information center.

The Upper Hutt Information Centre has a fantastic publication, *Walkways in Upper Hutt*, that lists tracks from short walks to full-day tramps. One of the most popular in the area is the 17-km (10-mile) Rimutaka Incline that follows the old railway line from Cross Creek to Kaitoke. You'll go through four tunnels, so take a flashlight. It's about 4½ hours one-way or 2½ hours to the summit. Access is off SH2 at the signs; look for the glider club and GoKart raceway.

◆ Sightseeing

A trip to Maori Treasures is an experience you won't soon forget. Erenora Hetet is a traditional weaver of cloaks who embraces new techniques and materials; her husband Rangi is one of the country's most respected carvers. Together with the rest of their family and students, they create art within a Maori tribal settlement in Lower Hutt. You can just pop into the gallery, gift shop and café, or book (at least a day in advance) for a "Journey with our Ancestors" tour. This tour ($85) is a brilliant way to spend three hours learning about Maori culture and art. At the end of the three hours, you will have created something to take home, perhaps a flute or small woven basket. There is also a full-day option ($210) that includes transport to and from your accommodation and a special tour of Te Papa, the national museum of New Zealand. Check the website or inquire

Tora Coastal Walk, Wairarapa



1. Colonial Cottage Museum
2. National War Museum & Carillion
3. WestpacTrust St. James THeatre
4. Downstage Theatre; Bats Theatre; Embassy Theatre
5. Oriental Parade Beach, Freyberg Pool
6. Mt. Victoria Lookout
7. Overseas Terminal
8. Museum of NZ (*Te Papa Tongarewa*)
9. Opera House
10. Wellington Convention Centre; Fowler Centre; Town Hall
11. Civic Square; City Gallery; Wellington City Library; Capital E Children's Museum
12. Queens Wharf Events Centre; Museum of Wellington City & Sea; NZ Academy of Fine Arts; Plimmers Ark Gallery
13. Cable Car and Cable Car Museum
14. Victoria University, Adam Art Gallery
15. Botanic Garden, Carter Observatory, Start of Northern Walkway
16. NZ Portrait Gallery
17. Government Buildings; Historic Reserve
18. Wellington Railway Station
19. Parliament Buildings; Start of City-to-Sea Walkway
20. National Library
21. Old St. Paul's Cathedral
22. Katherine Mansfield Birthplace
23. Interislander Ferry Terminal
24. Cruise Ship Terminal
25. WestpacTrust Stadium
26. Lynx Ferry Terminal
27. Dominion Post Ferry to Hutt Valley
28. To Wellington International Airport
29. To Wellington Zoo, Hospital

about other tours and educational options – you can try your hand at different art techniques. Open daily, 9 am-4 pm. 58 Guthrie Street, Lower Hutt, ☎ 04-939-9630, fax 04-393-9631.

Exhibits of international as well as New Zealand art change regularly at the Dowse Art Museum. Definitely worth a stop, the Dowse is more like a big city museum than the average art museum in the suburbs. Free admission, except for major exhibits. The Dowse is also the home to a good café. www.dowse.huttcity.govt.nz, 35 Laings Road, Lower Hutt, ☎ 04-570-6500.

Wairarapa

Wairarapa bills itself as a rural retreat and that's as good a description as any. As a region, it is home to just under 40,000 and includes the expansive area bordered on the west by the Rimutakas and Tararuas and on the east by the ocean. While a popular weekend getaway for those living in Wellington, it's a bit off the beaten path for most international tourists. Chances are, if you don't have much time, your trip to Wairarapa might be limited to a visit to the wine growing region of Martinborough.

◆ Getting Here

By Car

SH2 stretches between Wellington and Hawke's Bay. About 30 km (18 miles) north of Upper Hutt, you'll reach Featherston. Head east on SH 53 to Martinborough, 20 km (12 miles) away.

◆ Information Sources

Check out Go Wairarapa's website at www.wairarapanz.com.

Martinborough

Martinborough is a charming village that, having gained international attention for its Pinot Noir, has become a wine tourism center over the last couple of decades. It's a popular weekend getaway for Wellingtonians (think Napa and San Francisco) and, in addition to wine and food, offers some great diversions.

◆ Tourist Information

The information center is at martinborough@wairarapanz.com, 18 Kitchener Street, ☎ 06-306-9043, fax 06-306-8033.

◆ Adventures

On Horses

There are two horse-trekking operators; both are out on Ruakokopatuna Road, and both offer one- and two-hour treks with longer rides available upon request. Prices start at $30 per person. Fellcrag Horse Treks is smaller, probably the more laid-back, "nothing is a bother, mate," kind of place. fellcrag@paradise.net.nz, ☎ 06306-9284.

In addition to horses, the larger, more established Martinborough Horse Trekking on Patuna Farm has a "Pole to Pole Adventure Ropes Course" and the Patuna Chasm Walkway. The ropes course has swings, beams and trapeze. www.patunafarm.co.nz, ☎ 06-306-9966, fax 06-306-9506.

On Quad Bikes

Just 10 minutes from the town square is McLeods Martinborough Quad Adventures, where you can cruise around a 1,400-acre working farm on a quad bike. They offer 1½-hour, 2½-hour (the most popular option with the best views) and 3½-hour rides (for the more experienced). Prices begin at $90, the minimum age is 16, and a snack break is included in all trips. Bookings are essential and accommodation is available. www.mcleodsadventures.co.nz, White Rock Road, ☎ 06-306-9032 or 0800-494-335.

With Wine

As with other regions of New Zealand, wine growing here has taken off over the last two decades; Pinot Noir leads the parade, and is followed by Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris and a smattering of others. There are about three dozen wineries – but all together produce less than 3% of New Zealand's wine. Many tasting rooms are forced to close when they run out of stock, such is the demand for wine from these boutique grow-

ers. Quite a lot of Martinborough wine is finding its way overseas, and most of the wineries are exporting to the US and Canada.

Wine Tours are available through a number of operators. Ask at the information center or at your accommodation for a current listing. Or contact Wairarapa Coachlines, ☎ 06-308-9352 or 0800-666-355, fax 06-308-9358. There is an operator who offers horse-and-carriage wine tours; inquire at the information center for details.

Toast Martinborough *is the major wine festival here and is held the third Sunday in November. Tickets MUST be purchased in advance. www.ticketek.co.nz.*

My Favorite Wineries

If you want to learn about wine and feel you're starting at the ground floor, give Murdoch James a ring and book a "How to Taste Wine and Wine Tasting Tricks" class. For $20, you'll get tutored for an hour in flavors, aromas and wine characteristics.About six kilometers (three miles) out of town, it's definitely worth the drive for the wine, the restaurant and the educational aspects. They also have activities like clay bird shooting, laser tag and quad-bike riding. Not your typical winery. www.murdochjames.co.nz, Dry River Road, ☎ 06-306-9165.

One of the oldest wineries in Martinborough, Te Kairanga had its first vintage in 1986 and continually makes one of my favorite Pinot Noirs. At 2 pm on weekends you can tour the vineyard and winery and follow up with a tasting. www.tkwine.co.nz, Martins Road, ☎ 06-306-9122.

Ata Rangi is another of those on the must-visit list. I really like their Pinot Noir and their Craighall Chardonnay. This winery welcomes kids and there is a picnic area. www.atarangi.co.nz, Puruatanga Road, ☎ 06-306-9570.

Martinborough Brewing Company makes four different beers – wheat, dark, ale and lager – on-site, and also serves simple pub food. On New York Street, ☎ 06-306-8310.

At the Martinborough Wine Centre you can taste wines from many of the local wineries, buy gourmet foods and

other local products, and eat in the café. A great little spot. 6 Kitchener Street, ☎ 06-306-9040 fax 06-306-9070.

◆ Where to Stay

Martinborough has a plethora of homestays (where you stay with a family), B&Bs and cottages with bath and kitchen. During the summer months, they do book up (especially on the weekends when a lot of Wellingtonians venture over the hill), so best to inquire in advance and engage the services of the information center.

Right smack-dab in the middle of The Square is The Martinborough Hotel. Built in 1882, it underwent a major renovation in 1996 and just keeps improving. You can choose either an upstairs room that opens onto the wrap-around veranda in the main hotel building, or a more modern garden courtyard room. www.martinboroughhotel.co.nz, ☎ 06-306-9350, fax 06-306-9345 ($$$-$$$$).

Just four rooms make up the Petit Hotel, but they are all perfect. It's in a renovated old Victorian, right in the middle of town. The price includes a breakfast voucher for a local café or a continental breakfast delivered to your room. www.petithotel.co.nz, 3 Kitchener Street, ☎ 06-306-8086, fax 06-306-8087 ($$$).

My choice for rural accommodation is the Margrain Vineyard Villas. They all open onto a veranda that overlooks a creek and the neighbor's paddocks... perfect for eating the supplied continental breakfast. There is one big suite with a very spacious lounge; the others are studio units. www.margrainvineyard.co.nz, corner Ponatahi & Huangaura Roads, ☎ 06-306-9292 ($$$).

You would never expect to find the Claremont Motel tucked at the end of a quiet residential street. It's a small motel, but the eight apartment units are spacious and open onto beautiful gardens. www.claremont-motels.co.nz, 38 Regent Street, ☎/fax 06-306-9162, 0800-809-162 ($$$).

◆ Where to Eat

You won't be at a loss for nice places to eat. Try Est Wine Bar, for daytime platters and light meals, as well as evening dining featuring local fresh produce. The

open fireplace makes it comfortable year-round. Kitchener Street, ☎ 06-306-9665 ($$-$$$).

True to its name is The French Bistro. Lovely food, with seating for only 40. Classic. Kitchener Street, ☎ 06-306-8863 ($$-$$$).

The Martinborough Hotel Bistro is in the hotel and is a very popular, tasty place to eat. Fabulous wine list in addition to a fine menu; open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Kitchener Street, ☎ 06-306-9350 ($$-$$$).

Paekakariki Hill (Peter Sundstrom)

Kapiti Coast

The Kapiti Coast stretches for 40 km (25 miles) from Otaki in the north to Paekakariki in the south. It is only a 50-minute drive to Wellington and is easily accessible by car, train or bus. Many travelers choose to stay on the coast the night before their ferry to the South Island; likewise, many crossing from the South Island find Kapiti a perfect destination for their arrival day. But the Kapiti Coast is far more than a stopover on the way to or from Wellington – with its pleasant climate and relaxed lifestyle, more and more people are becoming "Kapiti Coasters."

Bordered on the west by the Tasman Sea, the Kapiti Coast boasts beaches that are safe for swimming, sailing, fishing and diving, and there is plenty of white sand for spreading blankets and dozing in the

sun. On the eastern edge of the region, the Tararua Ranges offer both short day-hikes and multi-day tramps into beautiful native bush. It's an agriculturally fertile area, where you will find plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables.

The name Kapiti Coast comes from Kapiti Island, home to a very important bird and marine reserve, five km (30 miles) offshore. Many endemic and indigenous rare and endangered birds live on the predator-free island.

◆ Getting Here

By Car

Getting to the Kapiti Coast is easy; just take State Highway 1. Otaki is 30 km (18 miles) south of Levin, and Paekakariki is 50 km (30 miles) north of Wellington.

By Bus

InterCity Coachlines and Newmans travel along the Kapiti Coast, as does White Star on its runs between Wellington and New Plymouth.

By Train

Tranz Metro operates train services between Wellington and Paraparaumu. For information, contact Tranz Metro, ☎ 04-498-3000, ext 44993, or Ridewell, ☎ 04-801-7000.

◆ Information Sources

The regional tourism website is www.kapititourist.co.nz.

Visitor information centers can be found in Otaki, at Centennial Park on SH1, ☎ 06-364-7620, fax 06-364-7630, and in Paraparaumu, in Coastlands Shopping Centre, also on SH1, ☎ /fax 04-298-8195. Both can be e-mailed at kapiti.info@clear.net

The Department of Conservation office for the region is in Waikanae, at 10 Parata Place.

◆ Otaki

Balloon flying over the Tararuas

Twenty km (12 miles) south of Levin, Otaki serves as the northern gateway for the Kapiti coast and the western entrance to the Tararua Ranges. Otaki is rich in Maori history, the home of several marae, or Maori meeting places, and a Maori university, Te Wananga O Raukawa (TWOR). TWOR was established in 1981 by an association of the three local tribes (Ngati Raukawa, Ngati Toa, and Te Ati Awa) and in 1999 became the first educational institution in NZ to supply a personal computer to every student.

Adventures

ON FOOT

Two km (about a mile) south of town, Otaki Gorge Road runs 19 km (12 miles) inland through the Otaki Gorge to Otaki Forks and the Tararua Ranges. There are many short walks, from 20 minutes to six hours round-trip, some of which must be avoided when the rivers are high or the weather is bad. Otaki Forks is also an access point for longer multi-day tramps but it's best to visit with the DoC or the resident ranger at the site. The Tararuas are noted for changeable weather and every year, ill-prepared trampers and day-hikers require assistance.

ON WATER

Otaki Beach is a long, sandy affair, popular with locals.

Kayaking and rafting are popular on the Otaki River, which is a grade II river. The Tararua Outdoor Recreation Centre operates daily rafting trips (October to April) of about three hours ($45 per adult) and kayaking on Sundays. torc@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 06-364-3110, fax 06-364-2210.

Where to Stay

A good, centrally located B&B, Aotaki Homestead has a bedroom in the house, a studio unit with kitchenette and a cottage with bath and kitchen. The hosts, Judy and Paul, are keen gardeners and growers, and the birdlife in their garden is astounding. The cottage is particularly good for long stays. aotaki.homestead@paradise.net.nz, 11 Dunstan Street, ☎ 06-364-6438, fax 06-364-6461 ($$).

Right on SH1, but tucked away in a quiet garden is Waitohu Lodge, a comfortable and clean B&B. www.waitohulodge.homestead.com, 294 State Highway 1, ☎ 06-364-5389 or 0800-364-239, fax 06-364-5350 ($$).

Just a short walk to the beach is Byron's Resort with motel units, tourist apartments, tent and camper sites, and a beachside cottage. It's got all the holiday park features: swimming pool, spa, playground, tennis courts, and a good restaurant. www.byronsresort.co.nz, 20 Tasman Road, ☎ 06-364-8121, fax 06-364-8123 ($$-$$$).

Cottage Park Motel & Conference Centre has clean and spacious cottages with bath and kitchen, plus studio units. cottagepark@kapiti.co.nz, 272 State Highway 1, ☎ 06-364-6228, fax 06-364-7228 ($$-$$$).

Nirvana Backpackers is a small (only five beds) and cozy house-turned-hostel just a short walk to the beach. There is a garden, meditation room, spa pool, kayak and bikes to use. Transport to and from Otaki is available. nirvana@paradise.net.nz, 41 Rangiuru Road, ☎ 06-364-0115 ($).

Where to Eat

As in most small towns, there is a pretty good selection of takeout places and "good old Kiwi tucker" (that's food), but nothing much that stands out.

◆ Waikanae

Waikanae is 10 km (six miles) south of Otaki,and is split between the busy commercial center on SH1 and the beach town, located four km (two miles) down Te Moana Road.

Adventures

WATCHABLE WILDLIFE

Nga Manu Nature Reserve, operated by Nga Manu Trust, is a 40-acre bird and wildlife sanctuary set in native and virgin bush just west of Waikanae. Up to 300 birds are rehabilitated annually and those healthy enough are reintroduced to the wild; those unable to survive in the wild are given lifetime accommodation at the reserve. The bird enclosures are open-plan, allowing visitors an unobstructed view of the birds, but are made for the animals, not humans – the enclosures are built so birds can get away from visitors if they want to. Open from 10 am to 8 pm from Boxing Day to Wellington Anniversary Day; 10 am to 5 pm the rest of the year. $7.50 for adults, $3.50 for under age 15. www.ngamanu.co.nz, off Ngarara Road, ☎/fax 04-293-4131.

Where to Eat

At Waikanae Beach there is a great little café, The Front Room. There's a fantastic blackboard menu, current magazines and couches on which to read them, sidewalk tables, good coffee and wine. Brunch is served from 10 am to 3 pm and dinner from 6 pm; closed Tuesday night and all day Wednesday. It's the kind of place that would be your local café if you lived here. 1/42 Tutere Street, ☎ 04-905-4142 ($$).

◆ Paraparaumu

Paraparaumu is the biggest town on the Kapiti Coast and the commercial center for the region. The necessities of life (including the visitor information centre) can be found at and around the Coastlands Shopping Center, the beach town is three km (two miles) west on Kapiti Road.

As you drive toward the coast, you'll pass the Paraparaumu Airport on your left and, a little later, the Paraparaumu Golf Course on your right. This is the course where Tiger Woods played in the NZ open, which the locals are very proud to tell you about. They say it's a rare example of a classic links-style course, with influences of the windy coast, fast greens and rolling fairways. www.paraparaumubeachgolfclub.co.nz, 371 Kapiti Road, ☎ 04-902-8200, fax 04-902-8201.

Sightseeing & Shopping

A bit touristy, but worth a stop, is The Lindale Centre, one km north of Paraparaumu. Kapiti Cheese and Ice Cream (both some of the best in New Zealand) have shops there, in addition to Kapiti Olives, Kapiti Candies and The Honey Hive. Farm walks and a weekend farm show at 2 pm (daily during school holidays) give the kids something to do. ☎ 04-297-0916. Other tasty stops include Nyco Chocolate Factory Shop, ☎ 04-299-8098, and Prenzel Distillery, ☎ 04-902-9559, both located at the corner of SH1 and Raumati Road and open seven days a week for tastings and sales.

THE SOUTHWARD CAR MUSEUM

This is what happens when a collector has the means to collect and the generosity to share his passion with the public. Housing not only the largest collection of vintage cars in the Southern Hemisphere (over 250), the museum also has too many engines to count, bicycles, motorcycles, typewriters, suits of armor and airplanes hanging from the ceiling (including a 1941 Tiger Moth and one of the planes used in the 1965 movie *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines*). Museum hours are 9 am to 4:30 pm daily, except Christmas, Good Friday and ANZAC morning (April 25, honoring Australia New Zealand Army corps soldiers). $5 per adult; $2 per child. southward@kapiti.co.nz, Otaihanga Road, ☎ 04-297-1221, fax 04-297-0503.

KAPITI ISLAND NATURE RESERVE

Kapiti Island

Five km (three miles) offshore from Paraparaumu, this is an absolute treasure and the most popular destination in the area. Ten km (six miles) long and two km (a mile) wide, Kapiti is home to some of New Zealand's rarest and most endangered birds and is easily accessible to the public. Fifty visitors per day are granted permits from DoC and

Kaka

are likely to be rewarded with sightings of kaka, kakariki, robins, saddleback, stitchbird, weka, kereru, bellbirds, tui and takahe. Two types of brown kiwi and little spotted kiwi also make their home on the island. Day visitors arrive at Rangitira Point and have the option of three walking tracks, the Trig (steepest) and the Wilkinson (gentler) joining and leading to the 521-meter (1,700-foot) summit of Tuteremoana and the North Track. A round-trip to the top takes about three hours, but take your time, walk slowly and stop often to see and listen to the birds. Keep in mind that the best bird-viewing spots are at the lower segments of the tracks. The North Track is a two- to three-hour trip, following a coastal route with some hills, to Waiorua Bay and Okupe Lagoon.

Permits to visit the island must be obtained from DoC Visitor Information Centre, Government Buildings Historic Reserve, Lambton Quay, Wellington, ☎ 04-472-7356. Permits are non-refundable but, in the event of weather prohibiting boat access, are transferable to another day. The cost of $9 per adult and $4.50 per child covers DoC permits and mandatory introduction talks. One-hour guided walks are available for an additional $10. With only 50 permits granted a day, the summer fills up quickly, often up to three months in advance, so book as soon as you know your intentions. DoC will provide you with options for boat transport; round-trip fare per person is usually $30.

South Island
Marlborough
Introduction

Wine, water and wilderness. Those are the buzzwords in Marlborough, one of the sunniest regions in New Zealand. At the top of the South Island, Marlborough is the place where most tourists are introduced to the less-populated, slower-going "mainland" as they cross the Cook Strait from Wellington to Picton.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Getting Here 208
- Information Sources 209
- Picton 211
- Blenheim, Renwick & the Wine Country 221
- Havelock & West 227

Captain James Cook first arrived in 1769 and, on his three journeys around the world, chose the Queen Charlotte Sound (which he named after the wife of King George III) to visit five times – coming here more than any other place on the planet.

Geographically, Marlborough encompasses the intricate Marlborough Sounds, the long flat Wairau plains and the hilly high country valleys of Awatere and Waihope. Three major rivers carve the bottomland of Marlborough: the Taylor, Opawa, and Wairau, all beginning in the mountains and terminating in the Pacific Ocean.

Like most of the South Island, Marlborough doesn't have as strong a Maori influence as the North Island, but the Maori are believed to have inhabited the region for nearly 1,000 years. The biggest skirmish between Europeans and Maori is called the Wairau Incident. There is a monument to it on SH1 near Koromiko/Spring Creek. European settlement brought farming and whaling. Gold and antimony were mined sporadically and many of the walking tracks are leftovers from the mining era.

Tourism and agriculture (including wine) are the main activities and sources of revenue. The overseas popularity of New Zealand Greenshell mussels has given rise to a burgeoning aquaculture and processing industry, a wealthy addition to commercial fishing and salmon farming.

Did you know? *As the Earth moves on the Alpine and Pacific faults, the rest of New Zealand rises slowly out of the water, the land masses of the Marlborough Sounds sink gently back into the sea.*

Getting Here

◆ By Water

Interisland Line operates a ferry service for foot and vehicle passengers. Ships have bars, cafés, childrens' play areas and movie theaters. Interisland Line ferry prices are tiered, just like airlines, so it pays to book ahead. Fares for foot passengers begin at $39 one-way, vehicles at $144. Crossings take three hours. Bookings can be made through information centers, www.interislandline.co.nz or by calling ☎ 0800-802-802.

South Island
(NASA Earth Observatory)

Bluebridge ferry sails between the North and South Islands twice daily and offers foot and vehicle passage. It also has restaurants, bars and entertainment areas. Fares are $49 per adult, $169 per car and bookings are made at www.bluebridge.co.nz, or ☎ 0800-844-844.

◆ By Air

Marlborough is served by three airlines – Air New Zealand (www.airnewzealand.co.nz, ☎ 09-357-3000 or 0800-737-000) and Origin Pacific (www.originpacific.co.nz, ☎ 0800-302-302). They fly between Blenheim and the rest of the country, while SoundsAir offers flights between Picton

and Wellington. Contact Sounds Air, www.soundsair.com, at the rail station in Picton or at ☎ 0800-505-505.

Tip: *If you are planning to travel in both directions across Cook Strait, do yourself a favor – fly SoundsAir one way and take the ferry the other, getting to see the Sounds from two different vantages.*

◆ By Train

The TranzCoastal travels between Christchurch and Picton daily. Fares begin at $35. In Blenheim, the rail station is on Grove Road and is the site of the information center; in Picton, the rail station is on Auckland Street, immediately across the street from the information center. Book through the information centers, www.tranzscenic.co.nz or by calling ☎ 0800-872-467.

◆ By Car

The main highways entering Marlborough are SH63 from the West Coast, SH6 from Nelson, and SH1 from Christchurch. Blenheim is approximately 1½ hours from either Kaikoura or Nelson and four hours from Christchurch. Picton and Blenheim are about 25 minutes apart.

◆ By Bus

The South Island in general, and Marlborough in particular, is serviced by InterCity Coachlines and a variety of smaller shuttle buses, including Atomic Shuttles, South Island Connections and Kahurangi Bus Lines. There are also smaller companies that service specific areas, like Abel Tasman Coaches and Hanmer Connection. I think the best way to arrange for transport on any of them is to visit one of the information centers, as schedules and companies change frequently.

Information Sources

Destination Marlborough is the tourism board for this region and can be visited at www.destinationmarlborough.com.

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Picton

Picton is the jumping-off point for exploration of the Queen Charlotte Sound and Queen Charlotte Track.

◆ Information Sources

The Visitor Information Centre is located on Auckland Street, directly across from the train station and at the end of the car park for the ferry terminal. pvic@destinationmarlborough.com, ☎ 03 520-3113, fax 03-573-5021. For DoC information, ☎ 03-520-3002.

◆ Adventures

On Water

Did you know? *The Marlborough Sounds, including the Queen Charlotte, Kenepuru and Pelorus, make up one-quarter of New Zealand's total coastline and are true "sounds" or flooded river beds.*

BY KAYAK

The Marlborough Sounds are among the nicest places in New Zealand to sea-kayak. Marine life is abundant in the Sounds and, depending on season, you'll see little blue penguins, fur seals, dolphins, orca and rays. The bird life is extraordinary, including pied and spotted shags, Australasian gannets and fluttering sheerwaters. While appearing calm, sea conditions in the Sounds can change quickly and be challenging. Guides are trained to read the weather and take you to appropriate places so, if you're not experienced, take a guided trip. Most day-trips are in the Grove Arm of the Queen Charlotte, a protected, wildlife-rich area. Expect to paddle about 15 km (nine miles) on a day-trip.

Love Sounds

Kayak Outfitters

The Marlborough Sounds Adventure Company is based on the foreshore in Picton and offers guided trips, as well as kayaks and camping equipment for rent. Prices for day-trips, including a catered lunch, are $90 per person. For a quick introduction to kayaking or if you've got a few hours before the ferry, take a twilight paddle, three hours for only $50. They also offer three-day trips to the Outer Sounds ($445), where camping on remote beaches and eating gourmet meals cooked by the guide makes the trip even more tempting. www.marlboroughsounds.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-6078, fax 03-573-8827.

Southern Wilderness NZ & Adventure Guides leads one-day trips from Picton or Waikawa for $80 per person, including lunch and transport. For $110 begin the day kayaking to Mistletoe Bay, then walk four hours on the Queen Charlotte Track and finish up with a road bike ride back to Picton. For $135, take a water taxi from Picton to a paddling destination higher in the Queen Charlotte Sound, paddle for the afternoon and then transfer back to Picton at the end of the day. Multi-day trips in all three sounds are available upon request, and accommodation can be in either luxury lodges or camping. Contact them for details. www.marlboroughsoundsnz.com, Located at Picton Railway Station, Auckland Street. ☎ 03-520-3095, fax 03-520-3096.

BY BOAT

Boat Tours

Take a Myths & Legends Eco Tour with Pete Beech, a sixth-generation Marlburian. Pete can tell you all the stories and history of this one-time whaling and sealing region. He and his wife Takutai are well-versed in both European history and Maori legends. ☎ 03-573-6891, www.eco-tours.co.nz.

A great way to spend the day on the water is taking a Mail Boat Trip. While the Marlborough Sounds don't feel particularly remote when you're sitting in Picton, most of the people who live in the Sounds can only access their home by water… and only get mail and supplies delivered by boat. Beachcomber Cruises is contracted with New Zealand Post to deliver the mail, and invites passengers to join in the fun. Queen Charlotte Sound trips leave from Picton at 1:30 pm every day except Sunday. Prices begin at $70 from Picton. Children ride free. ☎ 03-573-6175, fax 03-573-6176.

In addition to the mail boat, Beachcomber offers scenic cruises and water taxi services around the Queen Charlotte Sound (prices start at

$38) as do Cougar Line (from $48), www.queencharlottetrack.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-7925; and Endeavour Express (from $40), www.boatrides.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-5456.

DIVING

Divers World is located at Atlantis Backpackers in Picton and is a full-service PADI-accredited diving facility, offering daily trips into the Sounds (including shipwreck sites) and diving instruction. ☎ 03-573-7323.

FISHING

Ian Love owns and operates Picton Launch Charters; $50 gives you half a day of fishing with rods and bait supplied. He's been fishing in the Queen Charlotte for long enough to know where to find the fish and will even filet the ones you catch. ☎ 03-573-8558 or 025-358-364.

Sounds Connection goes out fishing every afternoon. All gear is provided and prices start at $69 for a half-day. Full-day and charter trips are available by arrangement. www.soundsconnection.co.nz, 10 London Quay, ☎ 03-573-8843 or 0800-742-866, fax 03-573-7726.

On Foot

Captain Cook *stayed in Ship Cove five times on his three voyages around the world; he planted gardens, tended to sick sailors and made friends with the local Maori. He also discovered scurvy grass there – if the sailors ate it, they didn't suffer from scurvy!*

QUEEN CHARLOTTE TRACK (QCT)

At 71 km (44 miles), this is the longest walking track in Marlborough and is one of the few in New Zealand where you can stay at lodges along the way. The track stretches, meanders, climbs and descends almost the entire length of the Queen Charlotte Sound. The QCT traverses varying terrain and some of the most fantastic views are from the ridgeline between the Kenepuru and Torea Saddles. Most tramp-

ers travel from north to south and take four days to do the entire walk, carrying just a day pack, letting the water taxi deliver their large packs to accommodations along the way. The information center has a *Queen Charlotte Track Brochure* and there is a good website, www.qctrack.co.nz, that includes contact information for most of the operators on the track.

Logistics

From Picton, take a water taxi to Ship Cove. The three major companies, Beachcomber, Cougar Line, and Endeavour Express (for contact details, please see boat tour section, page 208, above) all offer basically the same services, but departure times and prices vary. Regardless of which company you choose, opt for the pack-transfer service – the boat moves your luggage from one lodge to the next, you carry just a day pack. Following an hour ride from Picton (during which you're likely to see dolphins, penguins, seals and numerous sea birds), you'll be dropped off at Ship Cove where your walk begins.

Time Savers: *If sorting accommodation and water taxis seems a bit of a pain, contact either the Picton information center, Marlborough Sounds Adventure Company, or Southern Wilderness NZ & Adventure Guides. They can all put together packages for you. The two guiding companies even provide lunch the first day and arrange for a packed lunch on the others.*

Where to Stay Along the QCT

All accommodations are accessible by water taxi and some, as noted, by road. While walking it is a popular activity, those not interested in the track can still enjoy staying in the Queen Charlotte area.

~ Endeavour Inlet ~

Resolution Bay Cabins are rustic, with bath and kitchen, snuggled under giant trees and edged by a beach, are available for short- or

long-term stays. There is a café that bakes muffins every morning. Just under two hours from Ship Cove. ☎ 03-579-9411 ($-$$).

Queen Charlotte Wilderness Park

Furneaux Lodge is an icon in the Queen Charlotte Sound and the first-night destination of many walkers on the Queen Charlotte Track. The main lodge building, which was originally built as a holiday home, has an à la carte restaurant and full-service bar – a popular spot for Sounds locals. Accommodation ranges from private chalets to backpacker dorms. From Ship Cove, allow about five hours, including a lunch break. www.furneaux.co.nz, ☎ 03-579-8259 ($-$$$).

Ten minutes walk past Furneaux Lodge is Endeavour Resort, where simple accommodation ranges from backpacker hostels to motel units. They have a well-stocked shop and the relaxed atmosphere offers a great rest after tramping or fishing. endeavouresort@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-579-8381 ($-$$).

Punga Cove

~ Punga Cove ~

You can drive to the accommodations in Punga Cove along a twisting, paved road. From Picton, it's a bit over two hours.

Punga Cove Resort has all levels of accommodation, from backpacker hostels and a group lodge to private, secluded chalets. They also have a bar that serves simple meals and a full-scale à la carte restaurant that has spectacular views. Swimming pool, spa, Internet, BBQ, kayaks. www.pungacove.co.nz, ☎ 03-579-8561, fax 03-579-8080 ($-$$$$).

Mahana Homestead Lodge is just a bit farther along the inlet and offers bunk, twin and double rooms in the lodge that sleeps a total of 12. You have the choice of cooking yourself or home-cooked meals (meat or vegetarian). It's a simple, friendly place to stay, with a fabulous deck and lounge that has great windows for gazing. There is also a big beach, kayaks and fishing gear. www.mahanahomestead.com, ☎ 03-579-8373 ($-$$).

The Bay of Many Coves Resort was refurbished in 2003 from a simple fishing lodge to the most magnificent accommodation along the track. Most people come by water taxi, and once you arrive, you'll want to wear your dress-up clothes, not tramping gear. There is a shop, swimming pool, spa and brilliant restaurants. www.bayofmanycovesresort.co.nz, ☎ 03-579-9771 or 0800-579-9771, fax 03-579-9777 ($$$-$$$$).

~ Torea Saddle ~

Walking seven to eight hours from the Kenepuru Saddle, the track comes out at Torea Saddle. For accommodation, turn to the right – these accommodations are in the Kenepuru Sound, a 1½-hour drive from Picton.

Torea Saddle

Inside advice: *The walk from Kenepuru to Torea is absolutely my favorite day on the track. Yes, it's long, but you get into a good rhythm, and it offers the most spectacular views and glorious forest.*

Portage Resort Hotel has accommodation for nearly every budget, starting with backpackers and working up to luxury suites. You're guaranteed to be treated well, your room will be clean, comfortable and modern, the food is great, and there is a nice wine list. www.portage.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-4309. ($-$$$$)

The Portage Bay Shop has backpacker accommodation in bunk and double rooms. They have a well-stocked shop and rent kayaks, sailboats, launches, JetSkis and mountain bikes. Located just beside the resort. www.portagecharters.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-4445, fax 03-573-4442 ($-$$).

~ Lochmara Bay ~

Lochmara Bay

Lochmara Lodge is one of my favorite places in New Zealand. There is backpacker accommodation as well as individual motel-like units – all with views of the bay. You must cook your own food (there is no restaurant or bar), but there are gas BBQs as well as kitchens. There is an enclosed spa that opens to the bush, countless hammocks, a volleyball court, and walks around the property. The access road to the track has made the approach friendly to mountain-bikers as well as trampers. www.lochmaralodge.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-4554 ($-$$$).

Did you know? *The black on the beech trees is not from fire. It's a sooty mold. And the pinhead-sized golden droplets hanging from threads through the bark? That's honeydew – produced as a by-product*

from a scale insect that lives just beneath the bark. Gently touch your finger to a droplet and then place it on your tongue. You'll see why it's a favorite food for the bellbirds, tui and (unfortunately) German wasps.

GUIDED WALK OPTIONS

Marlborough Sounds Adventure Company focuses on the Queen Charlotte Track and offers four- and five-day guided walk options ($1,150-$1,400), as well as a paddle-and-walk (two days of each for $1,150), or the Ultimate Sounds Adventure – one day walking, one day kayaking and one day mountain biking ($430 with backpacker accommodation, but can be upgraded). www.marlboroughsounds.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-6078.

Southern Wilderness NZ & Adventure Guides has the broadest range of walk options in the Marlborough Region, including the Queen Charlotte, Nydia, Nelson Lakes, Sawcut Gorge, and the Heaphy. On the Queen Charlotte, they offer one- , four- and five-day options ($130-$1,245) with a range of accommodation levels and upgrades available. You can do all three sports (paddle, walk and cycle, $110) in one day, or choose a four-day kayak-and-walk (two days of each for $960). ☎ 03-520-3095, fax 03-520-3096, www.marlboroughsoundsnz.com.

On Bikes

The Queen Charlotte Track is New Zealand's longest single track and is open for bikes along its entire length from March 1 through November 30. But during the busy summer season (December 1-February 28) bikes are not allowed on the section between Ship Cove and Kenepuru Saddle.

Mountain-bike rental is available through Marlborough Sounds Adventure Company (see above for contact details).

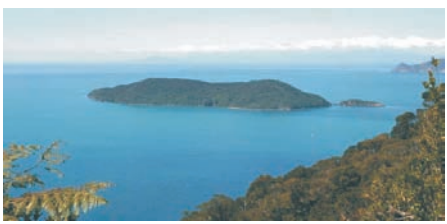
Tip: *If you only have one day and want to do some mountain biking, take your bike by water taxi to Waterfall Bay. Ride the track to Anakiwa – single track at its finest – and then the road back to Picton.*

In the Air

In addition to commuter fights between Koromiko (just outside Picton) and Wellington, SoundsAir offers three different scenic flights around Marlborough. Fares per person range from $100 to $220 and all flights require a minimum of two passengers. www.soundsair.co.nz, in the Picton train station on Auckland Street, ☎ 03-520-3080.

Watchable Wildlife

Dan and Amy Engelhaupt, the owners of Dolphin Watch Ecotours, are ex-pat American marine biologists and, from their base in Picton, explore the Queen Charlotte Sound, happily sharing their abundant knowledge of marine and bird life. All trips include a guided walk on Motuara Island, a predator-free bird sanctuary and home to the rare South Island saddleback, South Island bush robin, and Maud Island frog. Little blue penguins also make their home on the island, as do tui, wood pigeons, bellbirds and pied and spotted shags. On the way to Motuara, you will likely see shags, penguins, fluttering sheerwaters, Australasian gannets, New Zealand fur seals and, depending on the season, dusky, hector and/or bottlenose dolphins. If the weather cooperates, Dan and Amy lead a birdwatchers' trip, including a visit to White Rocks, one of two places in the world (the other is also in the Marlborough Sounds) to find king shag – among the largest cormorants known – and from April to October they offer dolphin swimming trips. Prices begin at $70. www.naturetours.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-8040.



Motuara Island

◆ Where to Stay

Not quite in Picton, but just a quick boat ride away is The Lazy Fish. This fabulous place is an upscale, magnificent place to chill out. Accommodation for a maximum of eight is in four cabins, each with its own terrace, outdoor bath, hammock and candles. The cabins are just lovely, as is the

central lounge and courtyard. There is a resident chef and all meals are provided. Minimum two nights stay. www.lazyfish.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-5291 ($$$$).

Picton

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Per room, double occupancy	
$	under NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$101-$175
$$$$	over NZ$175

Owner Laurel makes Lincoln Cottage a wonderful place to stay. It is a bed-and-breakfast with kitchen. Laurel can offer lots of advice on how to spend time while in Picton and Marlborough. www.pictonstay.com, 19 Lincoln Street, ☎ 03-573-5285 ($$-$$$).

Palm Haven has got to be one of the best values around. It's a B&B with four guest rooms. Peter and Dae are delightful, easy to talk to, and Dae claims she can teach anyone to understand cricket in five minutes, so that's reason enough to stay. palmhaven@xtra.co.nz, 15A Otago Street, ☎ 03-573-5644, fax 03-573-5645 ($$).

For simple, clean and friendly accommodation, try Aldan Lodge Motel. It's a basic motel offering studio and family units. There is a heated indoor swimming pool and breakfast is available. 86 Wellington Street, ☎ 03-573-6833, fax 03-573-6091 ($$).

The Broadway Motel offers good value for lodging – 18 units with bath and kitchen, all having private balconies or courtyards. www.broadwaymotel.co.nz, 113 High Street, ☎ 03-573-6563 ($$).

Bayview Backpackers is a good option, just a bit out of town and strolling distance to the beach at Waikawa (where there is a little shop and café). There are free kayaks and bicycles to use. bayview.backpackers@xtra.co.nz, 318 Waikawa Road, ☎ 03-573-7668 ($).

If you're traveling on a budget, but still want privacy, stay at Sequoia Lodge. There is a separate TV lounge, a large kitchen (they bake fresh bread daily and make soup in the winter), and twin and double rooms with en-suite bathroom, in addition to mixed and female-only dorms. www.sequoialodge.co.nz, 3a Nelson Square, ☎ 03-573-8399 ($).

If you'd rather have vegetable soup and apple crumble than fresh bread, and if you like hanging out in a hammock under a big tree, then pick The Villa, just a few steps away from the ferry terminal. This old villa has been designed as a retreat for the traveler, offering doubles with en-suite bathrooms, twins and dorms. They have a wonderful

garden, and have recently expanded to include the house next door. www.thevilla.co.nz, 34 Auckland Street, ☎ 03-573-6598 ($-$$).

Alexander's Holiday Park has the full range of options, from tent sites to cabins with baths. There are some pleasant sites among the trees and the kitchen/laundry/shower facilities are all clean. A very friendly place. alexanders.picton@xtra.co.nz, Canterbury Street, ☎ 03-573-6378 or 0800-474-2866 ($).

Right in town across from the Picton marina is Blue Anchor Holiday Park. Well-appointed tourist apartments and cabins; tent and powered campervan sites. www.blueanchor.co.nz, 78 Waikawa Road, ☎ 03-573-7212 ($-$$).

◆ Where to Eat

Cibo has café food; their dinners are very tasty and often innovative. I really like their fish. They also have good breakfasts, make great coffee and offer sidewalk service. Perfect place to people-watch. 33 High Street, ☎ 03-573-7171 ($$-$$$).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée	
$	under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$21-$30
$$$$	over NZ$30

Le Café is on the waterfront and there can't be many better ways to spend a morning than sitting at one of the patio tables, drinking a latte and watching the ferries come in and the kayaks go out. There is always fresh fish on the menu and often a wonderful venison dish. London Quay, ☎ 03-573-5588 ($$-$$$).

Espresso House doesn't have a harbor view, but it's got a garden out back instead. The menu changes often, but is usually inspired by Asia and the Pacific Rim. This is the most likely place to find some innovative vegetarian food. 58 Auckland Street, ☎ 03-573-7112 ($$-$$$).

Blenheim, Renwick & the Wine Country

Blenheim is definitely the commercial center for the region and has the requisite shops and service providers. It's about 20 to 25 minutes south of Picton on SH1.

◆ Information Sources

A good local map is available for free at the information center, located in the historic railway station on State Highway 1. mvic@destinationmarlborough.com, ☎ 03-577-8080, fax 03 577-8079.

There is a DoC office on Gee Street in Renwick, ☎ 03-572-9100.

◆ Adventures

On Water

White's Bay, just North of Rarangi on Port Underwood Road, is a popular surf and swimming beach and has a surf club complete with showers. It's also a great place to camp and hike.

On the Farm

You need to turn your watch back 40 years when you drive into Lansdowne Farm Park. David and Margaret Dillon live on a classic 1960s Kiwi family farm in the Wairau Valley. There are cows to be milked, pigs to be fed, eggs to be gathered and sheep to be sheared – it's a nostalgia trip for adults and a new experiences for kids. Farm tours range cost $5-$45 per person and accommodation is available with B&B in the house and the two cottages. Backpackers are invited to partake in a "work to stay" program. www.lansdowne.co.nz, ☎ 03-572-2838, fax 03-572-2828 ($-$$$).

In the Air

Every two years (2005 was the last one) over Easter Weekend, the sky above Marlborough comes alive with Classic Fighters. It's an air show and more – recreating battle scenes from WWI and WWII. On the ground, displays and performances round out the experience. www.classicfighters.co.nz.

With Wine

Tip: *The second Saturday in February is the BMW Wine, Food and Jazz Festival, the largest and longest-running wine festival in New Zealand. You can try over 150 wines from more than 40 wineries, eat local foods and listen to great music. www.winemarlborough.net.nz*

Herbaceous Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc is what put New Zealand on the wine-making map. Marlborough is the largest wine-producing area in New Zealand, but quantities are still small compared with the giant growers of other countries – most of the wineries here are still considered "boutique." More than 60 wineries have planted in the rocky soil that comes from this river-rich area.

Maps of the wineries are available at the information center and at most accommodations. While very few wineries charge for tastings, if they do, the fee is usually credited toward anything you might buy.

Wine Tour Options

Barry's Wine Tours is the way to go if you want a personalized tour. He's more liable to take you to the smaller, off-the-beaten-path wineries and introduce you to the owners and winemakers than the other guided trips. Barry also offers farm tours and general sightseeing in the area. Prices begin at $50. www.yp.co.nz/for/marlboroughwinetrails, ☎ 03-578-1494 or 025-264-4704.

DeLuxe Tours travel a set route each day. The tour is $45 per person and can be booked through www.deluxetravel.co.nz, ☎ 03-578-5467.

Half- and full-day tours with The Sounds Connection seem to have a more lively, party atmosphere than the other companies. Prices range from $45 for a half-day to $55 for a full-day (lunch is extra). www.soundsconnection.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-7726.

Southern Wilderness NZ & Adventure Guides offers walking and cycling wine tours. www.marlborough-soundsnz.com, ☎ 03-520-3095 fax 03-520-3096.

Another great option for touring the wine region is by bike. Because many of the wineries are located within a 20-km (12-mile) circuit on flat ground, cycling is an exceptional way to get around. There's a bike route and you can pick up a map at the information center.

Regardless of whether you join a tour or ride a bike, there are, in my mind, some not-to-miss wineries. However, because many winery restaurants are open for evening dining only on the weekends and

change their hours depending on the season, if you want an evening meal, it pays to book ahead.

Get your feet wet at Montana Brancott Winery. Tours are run every half-hour from 10 am until 3 pm and cost $7 per adult. There is a large retail shop, tasting area with hard-to-find wines, and a wine education center. The restaurant is open seven days a week from 10 am to 5 pm. State Highway 1, Riverlands, ☎ 03-578-2099, Restaurant ☎ 03-577-5775.

My Favorite Wineries

Allan Scott Wines & Estate is a family-owned and -operated top-of-the-line kind of place. Twelve Trees Restaurant at Allan Scott offers indoor and outdoor dining on the patio. Lunch is served every day and dinner on the weekends. Jacksons Road. Winery, ☎ 03-572-9054; restaurant, ☎ 03-572-7123.

Bladen must be one of the most laid-back and friendly wineries I've ever visited. The cellar door is outside and the resident dogs and cats all have grape-inspired names. Conders Bend Road, ☎ 03-572-9417.

Cellier LeBrun made its name with Méthode Traditionnelle sparkling wines. Terrace Café is the restaurant here and a great place for breakfast, lunch or dinner on the weekend. Terrace Road, ☎ 03-572-8859.

Forrest Estate is one of the few wineries that realize some wine tourists travel with children. John and Brigid Forrest invite you to bring a picnic and eat by the lake, play volleyball, enjoy some outdoor activities with your kids. 19 Blicks Road, ☎ 03-572-9084.

Grove Mill is a must visit for the wine tastings, the art gallery and the vine library – grapes of different varieties growing side-by-side, allowing you to compare what you're drinking before you drink it. They also have a sensory evaluation where you can take a whiff of the different aromas that make up Sauvignon Blanc and train your nose to find them in the wine. Waihopai Valley Road, ☎ 03-572-8200.

Herzog Winery has been called New Zealand's only European dining experience. Therese and Hans Herzog

had a winery and Michelin star-rated restaurant in Switzerland before immigrating. They brought traditional European winemaking – big, heavy reds – with them. The restaurant is the best in New Zealand and has impeccable service, superior food, a gigantic wine list, and fantastic views of the Richmond Ranges. 81 Jeffries Road, ☎ 03 572 8770.

Highfield Estate is perched on a hill and is a great spot to drink in the views with a bottle of wine while enjoying lunch or an afternoon platter. Brookby Road, ☎ 03-572-9244.

The Cork & Keg served as my neighborhood pub when I lived in Marlborough. A good change of pace from wine, too, and you'll likely be having a beer with someone who made the wine you tasted earlier in the day. Inkerman Street, ☎ 03-572-9328.

◆ Where to Stay

In Blenheim

Copper Beech House is an informal B&B housed in what was The Old Mercy convent. Singles, twins and doubles, some with en-suite bathroom. moian@xtra.co.nz, 73 Maxwell Road, ☎ 03-579-3399, fax 03-579-3398 ($$).

Henry Maxwell's Central B&B is just that – central to town. It's in a big, old house with mature landscaping. Breakfast is big and homemade. www.henrymaxwells.co.nz, 28 Henry Street, ☎ 03-578-8086 ($$-$$$).

Admirals Motor Lodge is an expansive, clean and welcoming motel. www.admirals.co.nz, 161 Middle Renwick Road, ☎ 03-577-7711, fax 03-577-7712 ($$-$$$).

At Alpine Motel they advertise that you'll "spend a night, not a fortune," and it's true. Nothing fancy, but the studios, units with bath and kitchen and family suites are all definitely good value. 148 Middle Renwick Road. ☎ 03-578-1604 or 0800-101-931, fax 03-578-577-6367 ($$).

Blenheim Palms Motel has very clean studio, one- and two-bedroom units, some with spas. Cooked and continental breakfast is

available. www.blenheimpalmsmotel.co.nz, corner of Henry and Charles Streets ($$-$$$).

Good accommodation at a fair price can be found at Chateau Marlborough. Continental and cooked breakfast is available, there is a poolside bar and the location is close to the town center. www.marlboroughnz.co.nz, corner High and Henry Streets, ☎ 03-578-0064 or 0800-752-275, fax 03-578-2661 ($$-$$$)

For an upmarket experience, try the Hotel d'Urville, a small luxury hotel right in the middle of town. The bar is a fine place to enjoy a few drinks and the restaurant is a must. www.durville.com, 52 Queen Street, ☎ 03-577-9945, fax 03-577-9946 ($$$$).

A very good budget accommodation is The Grapevine Backpackers on the banks of the Opawa River. Dorm, twins and doubles. rob.diana@xtra.co.nz, 29 Park Terrace, ☎ 03-578-6062 ($).

Koanui is a Maori word that means "large and happy place to meet and stay." It's a very fitting name for this backpackers hostel just outside the center of town in a circa-1900 guest house. www.koanui.co.nz, 33 Main Street, ☎/fax 03-578-7487 ($).

There aren't too many camping options right in Blenheim, but the Blenheim Bridge Top 10 Holiday Park is a nice enough place to pitch a tent along the river or rent a tourist apartment, cabin, or room in the lodge. They also have backpacker accommodation available. www.topparks.co.nz, just over the bridge on SH1, 78 Grove Road, ☎/fax 03-578-3667 or 0800-268-666 ($).

Around the Wineries

The Airport Motel in Renwick is a simple kind of place with all you need for a night's rest. www.renwick.co.nz, 46 High Street, Renwick, ☎ 03-572-8767 or 0800-767-797 ($$).

Antares Homestay is at the end of Jeffries Road, right near the Wairau River. The guest rooms are separate from the main house and there is a private guest lounge. www.marlborough.co.nz/antares, Jeffries Road, Blenheim, ☎ 03-572-9951, fax 03-572-9940 ($$$).

Timara Lodge is one of the loveliest places to stay in Marlborough. Adjacent to Spy Valley Wines, Timara is tucked into 25 acres of gardens among a total of 600 acres. It's an idyllic retreat set in the vineyards, complete with a swimming pool and lake with a rowboat and caters to a maximum of eight guests (it's not suitable for children). www.timara.co.nz, Dog Point Road, Blenheim, ☎ 03-572-8276 ($$$$).

St. Leonards is a circa-1884 homestead, and the four accommodation buildings with baths and kitchens are spread around five acres. This is a lovely base for visiting the area, and children are welcome. www.stleonards.co.nz, 18 St. Leonards Road, Blenheim, ☎ 03-577 8328, fax 03-577-8329 ($$-$$$).

Just when you thought you'd never be able to afford to stay amid the grapes, you stumble across a place called The Moose Lodge. On the property of Isabel Estate, this Kiwi lodge with bath and kitchen is relaxed, casual and comfortably sleeps groups of up to 12. www.isabelestate.com, 72 Hawkesbury Road, Renwick, ☎ 03-572-8300 ($-$$).

Watson's Way Backpackers is a specially built facility with doubles, shares and tent sites. Located on Highway 6 in Renwick, they usually have bicycles for use and are eager to help you plan your adventures in Marlborough. www.watsonswaybackpackers.co.nz, 56 High Street, Renwick, ☎ 03-572-8228 ($).

◆ Where to Eat

For an excellent, filling evening meal go to Bacchus. They have a menu of fish, meat and vegetarian options and a good wine list. 3 Main Street, ☎ 03-578-8099 ($$$).

Bellafico Restaurant and Wine Bar is a dependable place to eat and there is usually a fish option, as well as the requisite meats. Very good breads and starters. 17 Maxwell Road, ☎ 03-577-6072 ($$$).

I am not a big meat eater, but they know how to do it right at the D'Urville Wine Bar and Brasserie. The other options on the menu are just as good and diners are rewarded with a little chocolate truffle at the end of their meal. Located in the Hotel D'Urville, ☎ 03-577-9945 ($$$).

The food at Figaro's is fresh and simple, and the flavors are not overpowered by too many ingredients. This is my favorite Blenheim restaurant. Scott Street, ☎ 03-577-7277 ($$-$$$).

Havelock & West

SH6 leads to Havelock – the access point for activities in the Kenepuru and Pelorus Sounds – and farther on to Nelson. When traveling from Picton, you have the option of the scenic Queen Charlotte Drive or heading toward Blenheim and taking Rapaura Road through the wine region. Rapaura Road and Queen Charlotte Drive take the

Kenepuru Sound (Ian Trafford)

same amount of time (about 45 minutes) – the latter being twisty and hilly along the edge of the Grove Arm of the Queen Charlotte; the former flat and straight, but past plenty of tasting rooms. The choice depends on your interests. If you opt for the scenic, ask for a map at the Picton information center – it points out picnic spots, galleries and shops along the way.

◆ Adventures

Pelorus Bridge is a must on a hot day! There are great swimming holes and gigantic rocks to sun on – treat yourself and act like a seal for the day, sleeping on a rock and rolling into the water to cool off. Pelorus Bridge is about midway between Blenheim and Nelson, just 15 minutes from Havelock on Highway 6.

There is also a choice of interpretive walks at Pelorus Bridge through the forest and along the river. The Tawa Path wanders through some gigantic rimu and tawa trees and only takes about 30 minutes. Another 30-minute option is the Circle Walk along the Rai River… it'll take you through ferns, rimu and beech. If you have more time, try the Trig K Loop. It takes two to three hours to complete the circuit that begins with a leisurely stroll to Elvy Falls.

On Water

For information on kayaking in the Kenepuru and Pelorus Sounds, contact Southern Wilderness NZ & Adventure Guides (www.marlboroughsoundsnz.com, ☎ 03-520-3095, fax 03-520-3096) or Sounds Wild (www.soundswild.com, ☎/fax 03-573-5577). Both are based in Picton.

Marlborough Travel has two scenic-cruise departures daily from the Havelock Marina, at 9:30 am and 2 pm (one cruise daily in winter).

While traveling through the inner Pelorus and Kenepuru Sounds, you'll not only learn about the region and the farming of greenshell mussels, but will have the chance to try some – freshly harvested and cooked for you while you sip a glass of Sauvignon Blanc. For a full-day adventure, take the morning run, get dropped off at St. Omer, Raetihi or Portage Resort for lunch, plus a bit of a walk, a kayak trip, or beach lounging, and get picked up on the return. $69 per adult, with special family rates. They also run half- and full-day sport-fishing snapper trips. www.marlboroughtravel.co.nz, ☎ 03-577-9997.

Also operating out of Havelock is Chris Hobbs. Chris limits his trips to five anglers and goes in search of snapper, kahawai and yellowtail kingfish. hobzee@ihug.co.nz, ☎ 03-574-2911 or fax 03-574-2914.

On Foot

THE NYDIA TRACK

I'm all for making things easy and, with one telephone call to Rutherford Travel, you can arrange water taxi, shuttle pick up and accommodation for the two-day walk on the Nydia Track. The water taxi will take you from Havelock to Shag Point, where day one – four to five hours of walking – begins. This day winds through some pastureland, has a bit of a climb and a few good views of the sounds. It ends in Nydia Bay. Day two is shorter, mostly through native bush with great examples of rimu, nikau palm, beech and kamahi. Pipi Beach is about 20 minutes before the end of the track and makes for a great swimming beach. At the end of the track, a van will be waiting to transport you back to Havelock. www.marlboroughadventures.co.nz, ☎ 03-574-2114 0800-742-897 fax 03-574-2109. The Nydia is open to mountain bikes.

Tip: *Take sand fly repellent, especially if you're considering time at Pipi Beach.*

◆ Where to Stay

In Havelock

The Havelock Garden Motel is small and simple, with rooms that have bath and kitchen. 71 Main Road, ☎ 03-574-2387, fax 03-743-2376 ($$).

Rutherford Lodge YHA has twins, doubles and small dorms. Right in town, and they will happily book travel activities for you. www.marlboroughadventures.co.nz, 46 Main Road, ☎ 03-574-2114 or 0800-742-897, fax 03-574-2109 ($).

For power sites, tent sites and cabins, go to Havelock Motor Camp, a handy, simple base for the area. 24 Inglis Street, ☎ 03-574-2339, fax 03-574-2335 ($-$$).

In the Kenepuru Sound

Gigantic home-cooked meals, profuse flower gardens and comfortable rooms all combine to make a stay at St. Omer like a trip to granny's. It's right next to the Nopera Golf Course, with kayaks to rent and a beach to collapse on; plan to stay for a few days. Accessible by car, but it's a long drive… easier to get a water taxi from either Havelock, Te Mahia or Portage. Inquire for current water-taxi operators. Tariffs include all meals. ☎ 03-573-4086 ($$).

Raetihi Lodge is a bit farther along the road from St. Omer (also accessible by water taxi and air – contact Raetihi for transport details) and is the upmarket accommodation choice on this side of the Kenepuru. It's in a gorgeous location and is a real "retreat." www.raetihi.co.nz, ☎ 03-573-4300 or fax 03-573-4323 ($$$$).

Hopewell Backpackers in Double Bay is one of the best backpackers in New Zealand. Its sunny, secluded location, great service, outdoor spa, bush walks, kayaks and mountain bikes make for a great experience. Mike and Lynley are fabulous hosts and see to it that everyone is comfortable. There are twins, doubles (some with en-suite bathrooms), small dorms, a brand-new common facility and kitchen. Accessible by road, but Mike and Lynley offer water transport for their guests – inquire to arrange (or, better yet, rent kayaks from Portage Bay Shop and paddle across). www.hopewell.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-573-4341 ($-$$).

◆ Where to Eat

A must spot to visit is Mussel Boys in Havelock, 73 Main Road, ☎ 03-574-2878, fax 03-574-2824 ($$).

Nelson

Introduction

Occupying the western top of the South Island is Nelson, filled with activities both on land and water. Nelson claims to be the sunniest region in New Zealand – but those living in Marlborough disagree. Home to three National Parks, Nelson is one of the most popular tourist destinations.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Getting Here 234
- Information Sources 235
- Nelson & Around 235
- Nelson to Farewell Spit 242
- Abel Tasman National Park 252
- Kahuramgi Natl Park 258
- Nelson Lakes Natl Park 261
- Murchison 263

Contrary to the meaning of Nelson's Maori name – *Whakatu*, "peaceful haven" – life hasn't always been so pleasant here. When the Maori began to move from the North Island to the South, the Ngati Tumatakokiri, who hailed from Taupo, settled in the area from Wakapuaka (east of Nelson) to Karamea (at the end of the Heaphy Track on the West Coast). When Dutch explorer Abel Tasman showed up in Golden Bay in 1642, he thought he had landed on the great southern continent that he had been sent out to find. But he cut his stay short when the Ngati Tumatakokiri attacked, killing four of his sailors. Tasman and the surviving crew turned tail and left New Zealand, having never set foot on land. Captain James Cook arrived in what is now Tasman Bay in 1770 and named it Blind Bay, but he didn't stick around. The next European, French Captain Dumont D'Urville arrived in 1827 aboard *Astrolabe*.

Abel Tasman

In the 1800s, the Ngai Tahu from Kaiapoi (near Christchurch) and Karamea (on the West Coast) and the Ngati Apa (from Rangitikei) attacked the Ngati Tumatakokiri, nearly decimating the tribe. The Ngati Tumatakokiri man-

Nelson to Cape Farewell

1. Hira Forest, Saddle Hill
2. Cable Bay Walkway, Pepin Island
3. QEII Drive, Founders Historic Park, Miyazu Japanese Gardens
4. Suter Te Aratoi o Whakatu Museum, Queens Gardens, Geographic Center of NZ Walk, Maitai River Walk, Grampians Walk, Dun Mountain
5. Touch the Sea Aquarium
6. Motueka District Museum
7. Takaka Hill, Ngarua Caves, Marble Mountain, Harrod's Hole, Bencarri Nature Park & Eel Farm, Paynes Ford
8. Rawhiti Caves
9. Wainui Falls
10. Tonga Island Seal Colony & Marine Reserve
11. Te Waikoropupu ("Pupu") Springs
12. Puponga Farm Park, Pillar Point Lighthouse, Farewell Spit Bird Sanctuary
13. Farewell Spit Lighthouse
14. Whatariki Beach
15. Cobb Track, Waingaro Track
16. Leslie-Karamea Track, Waingapeka Track
17. To Westport
18. To Nelson Lakes National Park

Beaches

Travers Valley, Nelson Lakes

aged to hold on to some of their land, only to be attacked by an alliance of three North Island tribes, the Ngati Toa, Ngati Rarua and Ngati Tama, in 1828. Te Rauparaha, the chief of the Ngati Toa, wanted to claim more land for his tribe than the others, which led to prolonged fighting and land-claim changes.

European presence began in 1841 when ships from the New Zealand Company arrived and picked Nelson as a settlement site. It quickly became clear that there wasn't enough land (as more than 2,000 people had arrived en masse) to grow food and fulfill contracts, so surveyors were sent to Wairau, which is now Marlborough. Disagreements between the Europeans and the Maori and among the Maori chiefs developed, as did confusion, misunderstandings and violence – those killed included not only the wife of Maori chief Te Rangihaeata, but 20 settlers and Captain Wakefield of the New Zealand Company. You can see the historical site of the Wairau Incident on SH1 in Spring Creek, between Picton and Blenheim. Nelson was settled eventually and a government was established in 1853.

Getting Here

◆ By Air

The Nelson airport is served by Air New Zealand (www.airnewzealand.co.nz, ☎ 09-357-3000 or 0800-737-000) and Origin Pacific (www.originpacific.co.nz, ☎ 0800-302-302). The airport is 15 minutes out of the city center. Flying time from Auckland is about one hour, 20 minutes.

◆ By Car

Nelson is an hour and a half on SH6 from Blenheim and two hours from Picton. From Nelson to Motueka is an hour and it's another hour from there to Takaka. Heading inland from Nelson on SH6, it takes an hour and a half to reach St. Arnaud and two hours to reach Murchison. From farther afield, it's about six hours from Christchurch to Nelson.

◆ By Bus

Both small shuttle companies and large buses provide service to and around Nelson. InterCity Coachlines provides transport by way of Blenheim and the West Coast. However, the timing of some of the West Coast

connections is inconvenient and your better bet is often one of the shuttles – Atomic or Kahurangi – but check with the information center for current information.

Within the region, Abel Tasman Coachlines, info@nelsoncoaches.co.nz, ☎ 03-548-3290, transports passengers to Motueka, Kaiteriteri, Marahau, Takaka, Totaranui, the Heaphy Track, Kahurangi National Park and Abel Tasman National Park. Kahurangi, www.kahurangi.co.nz, ☎ 03-525-9434, fax 03-525-9430, also provides scheduled service within the region, as well as between Picton and Blenheim.

Shuttle buses come and go from the Visitor Information Centre; InterCity is based at the Travel Centre, at 27 Bridge Street.

Information Sources

The very proactive Latitude Nelson produces a heap of maps and guides, as well as maintains www.nelsonnz.com. Visitor information centers are scattered around the region and listed in appropriate sections.

In Nelson, the always-busy, well-stocked Visitor Information Centre is located at the corner of Halifax and Trafalgar streets. DoC information and hut passes are also available. You can contact them at vin@nelsonnz.com, ☎ 03-548-2304, fax 03-546-7393.

In Richmond, the information center is on Gladstone Road, ☎ 03-544-4793.

Pick up copies of the Regional Visitor Guide*,* Tourist Guide to Potters, Eat Drink Nelson *and* Wine Art.

Nelson & Around

It's easy to find your way around Nelson; the main streets are on a grid and Christ Cathedral on the Square makes a good anchor. The Cathedral grounds are lovely to walk around, as is Queens Gardens.

Did you know? *The first game of rugby played in New Zealand was in Nelson on May 14, 1870. New Zealand has never been the same.*

◆ Adventures

On Water

Close to town with great water and sand, the beach at Tahunanui is a must! It's a popular family destination.

My favorite beaches, though, are at Rabbit Island – a bit farther out (18 km/11 miles) but definitely worth the effort. The 13-km (eight-mile) beach is backed by plantation forest and the shallow water is perfect to splash around in. Gates close at 9 pm and camping is not allowed.

On Foot

There are a few good walks close to town, including a one-hour round-trip to the geographic Centre of New Zealand, accessed from the Botanical Reserve. Centre of New Zealand is situated at the summit of Botanical Hill and is an easy walk or bike ride offering some spectacular views over Nelson and Tasman Bay. There are two access tracks to the Botanical Gardens, either via Milton Street (yellow) or Branford Park (blue).

In the Air

Scenic flights around the area can be arranged through Flight Corporation. Flight options include Farewell Spit, the Nelson Lakes, Kahurangi, and Abel Tasman National Parks and the Marlborough Sounds. You can also arrange for transport to and or from the Heaphy Track. ☎ 0800-359-464.

Tasman Tandems has a variety of paragliding trips and uses different sites depending on the weather. tasmantandems@e3.net.nz, ☎ 03-528-9283 or 021-544-800. Likewise, Nelson Paragliding uses different flying sites dependent on weather for tandem flying as well as multi-day instruction. www.paragliding.co.nz, ☎ 03-544-1182 or 021-544-800.

By 4x4 & With Adrenaline

Just east of Nelson is Happy Valley Adventures – the place for quad bikes and the Sky Wire. Yet another way to be propelled through the air at breakneck speed, the Sky Wire straps four people into a gondola chair that free-falls forwards on a strong cable, attaining speeds up to 100 kph (60 mph). Af-

ter the fall, the forward ride continues for a total of 1.6 km (one mile) over the bush and then you free-fall backwards and retrace that 1.6 km to where you started. The quad-bike riding is good here, too, through native and regenerating forest and with views of the Sounds and sea. There are two cafés. Quad rides start at $60 per rider, $25 per passenger, and Sky Wire is $85 adults, $55 children. www.happyvalleyadventures.co.nz, 194 Cable Bay Road, about 10 minutes north of Nelson. ☎ 03-545-0304 or 0800-157-300.

On Horses

Without a doubt, my favorite horse trek in New Zealand is Western Ranges Horse Treks. Located up the Baton Valley, and bordering the Kahurangi National Park, this is a really special place with very special horses. The rides go through Cheryl's and neighboring farms and most include river crossings (and, weather dependent, swimming with the horses). All the food is homemade and there is a cabin on the farm where you stay for two-day trips. The grand majority of Cheryl's clients are experienced riders and the two-day treks are very popular. I heartily recommend staying for two or more days. www.thehorsetrek.co.nz, ☎ 03-522-4178.

For short rides suitable for riders of all levels, try Stonehurst, where you can choose between scenic farm trails, river rides and sunset rides. Rides range from one hour to half-day but there are also short (20-minute) pony rides. www.stonehurstfarm.co.nz. Located off Clover Road East, eight kilometers (five miles) from Richmond on SH6. ☎ 03-542-4121 or 0800-487-357.

In Beer & Wine

Did you know? *The Nelson area has more breweries than any other area of New Zealand.*

Mac's Brewery offers one-hour tours that end with a full tasting. Open from 10 am-5:30 pm daily, until 6 pm during the summer. Tours are 11 am and 2 pm, $8 per person, under 15 must be accompanied by an adult (bookings advised during busy holiday periods). www.macsbeer.co.nz, 660 Main Road, Stoke, ☎ 03-547-0526, fax 03-547-7352.

Right in the middle of Founders Park is Founders Brewery and Café, which makes organic beer. Open daily from 10 am to 4:30 pm,

you can have a beer and lunch and spy on the beer-making through the windows. www.biobrew.co.nz, Founders Park, ☎ 03-548-4638.

Even though Nelson is a small player on the New Zealand wine stage, there are plenty of wineries to visit.

Tip: *Pick up Wineart, a map of the area produced by the local wineries.*

My Favorite Wineries

Grape Escape is a good stop; you can taste wine from Te Mania Estate and Richmond Plains, ☎ 03-544-4054, eat chocolates at Kerstien's, have a sample of Schnapps at Prenzel, buy some beautiful candles at Living Light, pick up NZ-made gifts at Escape. Then top it off with lunch at Grape Escape, ☎ 03-544-4341. Open seven days a week, at the corner of McShane Road and Coastal Highway 60.

Not too much farther down the Appleby Highway is Seifried Estate, one of Nelson's biggest wineries. They have very tasty food, a good outdoor area and a playground for the kids. www.seifried.co.nz, Rabbit Island turnoff, ☎ 03-544-1555.

Sunset Valley is a small, very friendly, BioGro-certified winery set on top of a hill, at the end of a dirt road. I love this place. www.sunsetvalleyvineyard.co.nz, Eggers Road, ☎ 03-543-2161.

One of Nelson's finest is Kahurangi Estate. In addition to Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay, they make Pinot Noir, Gewurtztraminer and Riesling. The café and wine bar is open daily from September to May. Lunch here is very large, with very good platters. www.kahurangiwine.com, Sunrise Road, Upper Moutere, ☎ 03-543-2980.

In Art

The Suter Te Aratoi o Whakatu is the Nelson region's public art museum. Set in the beautiful Queens Gardens, it has a wonderful range of exhibits of national significance. Open daily, 10:30 am to 4:30 pm. $3 adults, $1 students. www.thesuter.org.nz, 208 Bridge Street, ☎ 03-548-4699.

If you appreciate art, no visit to Nelson is complete without stopping at Hoglund Art Glass Galleries. Wandering through the shop is great, but in order to really appreciate hand-blown art glass, you must take a tour. The guided tour includes entry into the glass museum; after an introduction and video, sit outside the studio and just watch the process. Hoglund also has a gift shop at the Rutherford Hotel in Nelson. Open daily, 9 am-5 pm, tours at 10 am, 11 am and 2 pm. www.nelson.hoglund.co.nz, Landsdowne Road, Richmond, ☎ 03-544-6500.

Get a copy of Art in Its Own Place, a Nelson Regional Guide Book. It's a fantastic overview of the whole art scene around Nelson and gives bios on the artists, describes their art and includes wine, food, jewelry, fine art and pottery. Following are just a few of my choices.

I like Royce McGlashen Pottery because it's innovative and always changing. 128 Ellis Street, Brightwater, ☎ 03-542-3585.

If you like fibers, go into Silkwood Fibre Arts, Crafts Centre and Café.Hand-knits, silks and woven pieces. Westdale Road, Richmond, ☎ 03-540-2985.

The New Zealand Nature Company has a shop in town, as well as Internet-based mail order for outdoor, educational and eco gifts from New Zealand and around the world. www.nznature.co.nz, 49 Collingwood Street, ☎ 0800-028-0664.

Rosy Glow Chocolates are hand-made and the quantities are small – you're not going to find them all over the supermarket shelves. They are old-fashioned chocolates. On Beach Road in Collingwood and 20 Harley Street in Nelson, ☎ 03-548-3383.

◆ Sightseeing

Founders Historic Park is set up like an old town and all the buildings are open for walking around. The railway runs on weekends (and holidays) and there is a café at the rail station. The park is home to Founders

Brewery and Café and is set right beside Whakatu Marae and Miyazu Japanese Gardens. 87 Atawhai Drive.

A Nelson Icon

The World of Wearable Arts and Collectable Cars has become a Nelson (and New Zealand) institution. Beginning as a small fashion show held in a tent during a rainstorm in 1987, it has grown into an international event. The annual Montana WOW Awards Show is held in September in Wellington, but many of the costumes from prior years are housed in the WOW complex (displays change every four months), as is a huge collection of restored and original automobiles (those displays change every four months, too).

Open daily, 10 am to 6:30 pm in summer, 10 am to 5 pm in winter, $15 adults, $7 children. www.worldofwearableart.com, 95 Quarantine Road, ☎ 03-548-9299.

Guided Options Around the Area

Wine tours half- or full-day and other tour options of the region. Bay Tours, ☎ 03-545-7119 0800-229-868, http://webnz.co.nz/baytours.

With guided day-trips for the more active traveler, try Adventure Ltd. One climbing, caving and walking trip per week. $120 per person www.whenua-iti.org.nz, ☎ 03-526-7842, 0800-379-842.

◆ Where to Stay

The Lodge at Paratiho Farms is the premier luxury accommodation in the region. This magnificent place is set on a working farm and offers the best in accommodation and extras – swimming pools, spa treatments, activities. http://paratiho.co.nz, ☎ 03-528-2100, fax 03-528-2101 ($$$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Per room, double occupancy	
$	under NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$101-$175
$$$$	over NZ$175

The Last Straw Cottage is a charming B&B with bath and kitchen constructed from straw bales and located on a small farm in

Brightwater. www.laststraw.co.nz. Phone for directions, ☎ 03-542-3575 ($$$).

The Honest Lawyer Pub has much better than your average pub accommodation. It's a fun, special place to stay. www.honestlawyer.co.nz, 1 Point Road, ☎ 03-547-8850 ($$$-$$$$).

For a quiet affordable homestay, opt for Arapiki. www.nelsonparadise.co.nz, 21 Arapiki Road, Stoke, ☎ 03-547-3741 ($$-$$$).

Manuka Island Eco-Cottage is an environmentally friendly cottage with bath and kitchen built in 2002. Manuka Island is a private four-acre island on the Waimea estuary. www.manukaisland.co.nz, Redwood Road, ☎/fax 03-544-2762 or 025-242-1400 ($$$).

Palms Nelson has studio and family units in a central location. There is a very inviting swimming pool and right next door is the Trafalgar Center with tennis, squash, a skate ramp, etc. www.palmsnelson.co.nz, 5 Paru Paru Road, corner of Halifax and Rutherford Streets, ☎ 03-546-7770 or 0800-725-676 ($$$).

Apartments Paradiso is a new complex with a lap swimming pool, a spa and sauna. It's by the same owners as Paradiso Backpackers. They're in a great neighborhood location and the backpacker hostel has singles, dorms, twins and doubles, some with en-suite bathroom and some with gardens. The address for the apartments is paradisonelson@hotmail.com, 5 Tasman Street (on the corner of Weka), ☎ 03-545-7128 or 0800-269-667, fax 03-546-7533 ($$-$$$). The hostel is at www.backpackernelson.co.nz, 42 Weka, ☎ 03-546-6703 ($).

Mid City Motor Lodge lives up to its name. It's right in town and while a bit longer in the tooth, the rates reflect it. 218 Trafalgar Street, ☎ 03-548-3595 or 0800-264-321 ($$-$$$).

DeLorenzo's Motel is very convenient, tidy, and contemporary. The units are spacious (with washing machines and dryers) and the pool is inviting. It's a good choice. www.delorenzos.co.nz, 51 Trafalgar Street, ☎ 03-548-9774 or 0508-335-673 ($$$).

Shortbread Cottage is a small, friendly backpacker hostel with a pleasant garden and comfortable furnishings. 33 Trafalgar Street, ☎ 03-546-6681 ($).

Trampers Rest is also small and in a residential neighborhood. It pays to book in advance. It's a very friendly, homey place and you

can get information on walks and bike rides. 31 Alton Street, ☎ 03-545-7477 ($).

Nelson Beach Hostel is just a couple of blocks from the beach. They have camping gear for rent and free bikes! nelsonbeachhostel@xtra.co.nz, 25 Muritai Street, Tahunanui, ☎ 03-548-6817 ($).

◆ Where to Eat

For good value, just a little out of town is The Honest Lawyer, serving breakfast, brunch, lunch and dinner. It's on the water and you can eat in the garden. 1 Point Road, Monaco, ☎ 03-547-8850 or 0800-921-192 ($$-$$$).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée	
$	under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$21-$30
$$$$	over NZ$30

Along the waterfront are The Boat Shed Café, Passion, The Restaurant, and Fish Bizzare Brasserie and Bar. All of them are good. At The Boat Shed, you can sit outside on high stools and watch the boats while you eat fresh seafood. This is my choice for Sunday brunch. 350 Wakefield Quay, ☎ 03-546-9783 ($$-$$$).

At Fish Bizzare, you order your food and grab a beer, sit outside and people-watch. The food is fresh and tasty and reasonably priced. 272 Wakefield Quay, ☎ 03-548-3361 ($-$$).

An old icon is Chez Eelco, near the cathedral. It's a cool hangout. I've done breakfast and lunch and snacks here and never been disappointed. 296 Trafalgar Square ($-$$).

The Suter Park Café at the Suter Te Aratoi o Whakatu art gallery is fantastic! Not only is it set in the picturesque Queens Gardens, but there is great coffee, cakes, food, everything is good. 208 Bridge Street ($-$$).

Nelson to Farewell Spit

◆ Mapua

Heading south from Nelson on SH6, you'll soon reach SH60, the coastal route leading north to Motueka, Abel Tasman, Takaka and Collingwood. It's a rich agricultural area, where much of the region's fruit is grown. The first town you'll arrive in is Mapua (about 30 min-

utes from Nelson), a lazy little estuary town with more than its share of trendy and fun stops. At 8,500 acres, the Waimea Estuary, home to many plants, birds, insects and fish, is the largest in the South Island.

The inland route from Richmond to Motueka goes along the Moutere Highway and through the wine-growing region. It's an area strong in German history, with crafts and art and photogenic buildings. If you're staying in Nelson, a nice touring option is to take the inland route to Motueka and then come back via the coast.

Adventures

Touch the Sea is an aquarium geared to the kids and it's not "glassy" looking. Visitors can touch eels and rays, peer into rock pools, and watch octopi do their thing. Fish and other marine creatures are re-introduced to the sea after spending short times at the aquarium. A marine-education specialist is on staff conducting classes and seminars. $5.50 adults, $3.50 children. 8 Aranui Road, ☎/fax 03-540-3557.

Where to Eat

The Smokehouse has fabulous food (including great desserts and manuka-smoked fished) and you can't beat the location. Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. www.smokehouse.co.nz, Mapua Wharf. ☎ 03-540-2280 ($-$$$).

It is impossible to choose between all the great food at The Naked Bun Patisserie. This must be one of the best bakeries in New Zealand. 66 Aranui Road, ☎ 03-540-3656 ($).

Mapua is home to the Regional Wine Centre, where you can do comparative tastings of local beer, wine and olive oil. 67 Aranui Road, ☎ 03-540-2526 ($$).

◆ Motueka

From Mapua, continuing on SH60 toward Motueka, you will skirt around Ruby Bay, where there are lots of footpaths to the beach, and (in season) lots of places to buy fresh berries! Motueka, about 30

minutes from Mapua, was one of the main Maori settlements when the Europeans arrived.

Information Sources

The Visitor Information Center is well-stocked, extremely helpful and can provide DoC information and hut passes for the Abel Tasman, Heaphy Track and Kahurangi National Park. They have their own website, www.abeltasmangreenrush.co.nz, and can be contacted at bookings@abeltasmangreenrush.co.nz or mzpvin@xtra.co.nz, Wallace Street, ☎ 03-528-6543, fax 03-528-6563.

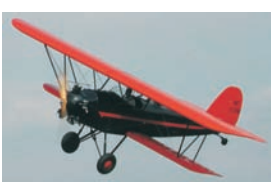
The Department of Conservation has an office at the corner of High Street and King Edward Street. Open weekdays. ☎ 03-528-9117.

Adventures

ON WATER

Motueka River Kayaks runs two trips each day and a twilight paddle on request. $78 adults, $45 children. www.riverkayak.net, ☎ 03-528-6222.

IN THE AIR



For something you'll never forget, go on an aerobatic flight in an open cockpit with Pitts-Special Biplane. www.abeltasmanair.co.nz, Motueka Airfield, ☎ 0800-360-180.

To zip around in style, call Tasman Helicopters. Taking a helicopter trip over the Tasman and Golden Bays or the National Parks would be a very special treat for your holiday. www.tasmanhelicopters.co.nz, Motueka, ☎ 03-528-8075, fax 03-528-8078.

Motueka is a popular destination for skydiving, and trips with Skydive Nelson leave from the Motueka Airport. www.skydive.co.nz, ☎ 0800-422-899, fax 03-528-4092.

Where to Stay

Equestrian Lodge Motel is a very pleasant motel that has park-like grounds and spacious lawns. www.equestrianlodge.co.nz, Tudor Street, ☎ 03-528-9369 or 0800-668-782, fax 03-528-6369 ($$-$$$).

Motueka Garden Motel has studios, one- and two-bedroom units and apartments. It's located away from the main drag in a quiet area. romelaine@hotmail.com, 71 King Edward Street, ☎ 03-528-9299 ($$-$$$).

There are lots of backpacker hostels to choose from. The Laughing Kiwi Backpackers is a smallish hostel with free fruit, coffee, and storage. marknwendy@xtra.co.nz, 310 High Street, ☎/fax 03-528-9229 ($).

Baker's Lodge is a specially built backpacker hostel and the hosts are very helpful and attentive. www.bakerslodge.co.nz, 4 Poole Street, ☎ 03-528-0102 ($).

On the main drag coming into town is Happy Apple Backpackers. There's space to unwind inside and outside in the sun. www.happyapplebackpackers.co.nz, 500 High Street, ☎ 03-528-8652 ($).

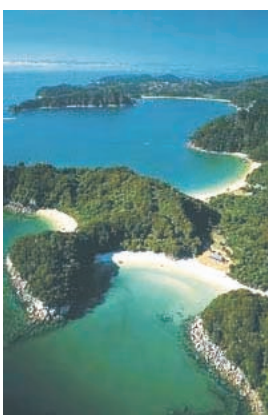
The Motueka Top 10 Holiday Park has motel rooms and units with bath and kitchen, cabins, and backpackers accommodations. Also room for campers and tents. www.motuekatop10.co.nz, 10 Fearon Street, ☎ 03-528-7189 or 0800-668-835 ($-$$).

Where to Eat

Hot Mama's Café is my favorite and all-time stand-by in Motueka. They have fabulous breakfast, lunch and dinner menus. 105 High Street ($-$$).

Thirst Café is next to the museum has great coffee and good food; it's my second choice after Hot Mama's. High Street.

◆ Takaka & Golden Bay



At the top of Takaka Hill, there is a viewpoint where you must stop. Look back toward Nelson at all the hops and fruit trees, the coastline, the mountains – it's fabulous. To the east is the Abel Tasman National Park, to the west, Kahurangi.

Also at the top of the Takaka Hill, 20 km (12 miles) from Motueka, is Ngarua Caves. The marble caves, discovered in 1870 and opened to the public in 1970, are the only known horizontal caves, so there isn't a lot of climbing to do, which makes them very accessible. Guided tours last about 45 minute.The caves are open daily from September to May and tours leave hourly from 10 am to 4 pm (and half-hourly during the busy holiday period). $11 adults. mte@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-528-8093.

Marble Mountain extends 140 km (87 miles) from north to south and is estimated to be 6,000 feet thick. It is home to the most extensive caving system in New Zealand.

Once you drop off the Takaka Hill, you are in Golden Bay, the "Heart of the Parks." SH60 is the only access to Golden Bay and its remoteness and isolation have allowed a casual, free spirit to survive. It's a crescent-shaped bay, hemmed by the Abel Tasman National Park on

the south, Farewell Spit on the North, and Kahurangi National Park on the west. There are marvelous beaches, unique landforms, great walking tracks, good food and funky places to stay.

Driving directly, it's about two hours from Nelson to Takaka. With a population of 1,200, it's the biggest town on Golden Bay and has a couple of worthwhile art cooperatives, some good cafés and a big organic food store.

Information Sources

The staff at the Golden Bay Visitor Information Centre is very knowledgeable about Kahurangi National Park and the activities around Collingwood and Farewell Spit. They also sell DoC hut and camp passes. gb.vin@nelsonnz.com, Willow Street, ☎ 03-525-9136, fax 03-525-9288.

The extremely helpful Department of Conservation office in Takaka can provide you with all the information you need for this section of the South Island. They are well-stocked and well-versed in all the walking tracks and seem almost clairvoyant as to what track suits what walker. Pick up a copy of the DoC brochure, *Golden Bay, A Guide to Conservation Areas.* Commercial Street, ☎ 03-525-8026. For bookings at Totaranui campground, call ☎ 03-528-8083.

Adventures

ON WATER

Pick a beach! From Pohara to Pakawau, there are places to swim and play. I like Pohara a lot – it's long and sandy and good place to base yourself. Ligar Bay is good for swimming as well and at Tata Beach there's often an espresso kiosk set up at beachfront.

Te Waikoropupu Springs, "Pupu" to those in the know, is the largest freshwater springs in New Zealand. Just north of Takaka (nine km/five miles), turn off on Pupu Valley Road; there is a short walking track tracing an old gold-mining water race to the springs and an underwater observatory window.

ON FOOT

The easily accessible Rawhiti Caves are just outside of Pohara and boast the largest entrance of any cave in New Zealand. You can go on your own for free (check with DoC for restrictions) or opt for a guided walk with

Kahurangi Guided Walks ($25, see *Guided Options*, page 261). The walk-in is through a mature podocarp forest and dry gorge and takes about two to three hours round-trip.

Another walk option is to Wainui Falls where you can go for a swim. From Pohara, head toward Wainui Bay and watch for the sign on your right. It's a short drive down the access road and then a 40-minute round-trip walk through attractive bush and lovely examples of Nikau palm.

Did you know? *The Nikau palm is the only native palm in New Zealand and is the southernmost-growing palm in the world. The trees can reach 45 feet (15 m).*

ON BIKES

In Takaka, be sure to call into The Quiet Revolution Cycle Shop. They know everything about biking in the area and have a map that describes 14 rides, including an overnight ride along the beach at Anatori and rides in the Wakatu Forest at Parapara. They rent bikes, too. ☎ 3-525 9555.

Where to Stay

It's a quick walk to good food, coffee and the shops from Anatoki Lodge Motel. In addition to studio, one- and two-bedroom units, there is a heated swimming pool. anatoki@xtra.co.nz, 87 Commercial Street, ☎ 03-525-8047 or 0800-262-333, fax 03-525-8433 ($$-$$$).

The Sunflower Motel is nothing fancy, but the cabin-style units are serviceable and clean, the owners are friendly, the use of the laundry is free and it's just a short walk down the path to the beach. Selwyn Street, Pohara Beach, ☎/fax 03-525-9075 ($$).

Pohara Beach Top 10 Holiday Park has just about every kind of accommodation and can get quite crowded over the holiday season.

But it's handy to the beach. www.pohara.com/paradise, Abel Tasman Drive, ☎ 03-525-9500 ($-$$).

San Souci Inn is made of mud brick with a sod roof. It's Mediterranean in style and the feel is relaxed, casual and friendly to the environment. The toilets are in a separate block and are the composting type. There are doubles, family rooms and a fixed-menu restaurant. reto@sanssouciinn.co.nz, Richmond Road, ☎ 03-525-8663 ($$).

Where to Eat

Dangerous Kitchen has good pizza, burritos, coffee and dessert. Eat-in or takeout. Commercial Street, ☎ 03-525-8686 ($-$$).

The Wholemeal Café has good bread, pizza, yummy baked treats and healthy salads to counteract them. There's often music and it's where the locals hang out. Commercial Street ($-$$).

Go to Golden Fries, where reggae on the stereo will entertain you while you sit outside and eat fish and chips. There is also an extensive gourmet burger menu and seafood. Commercial Street, ☎ 03-525-9699 ($-$$).

Mussel Inn is north of Takaka about 16 km (10 miles), but definitely worth the drive. They have homemade beer and cider, music many nights, and great indoor and outdoor seating. Open from 11 am, food served until 9 pm, music after 9 ($-$$).

◆ Collingwood & Farewell Spit

Collingwood is pretty much the end of the road. SH60 finishes up here and there's a secondary road out to Farewell Spit or inland to the start of the Heaphy Track. It's a quiet little town with a couple of places to stay, one store, and a few cafés. It's a jumping-off point to tour Farewell Spit and the windswept beaches on the west coast.

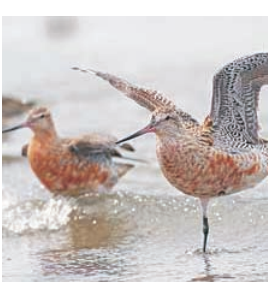
Tip of Farewell Spit

Watchable Wildlife

Farewell Spit is the long narrow tip at the north end of the South Island. A nature reserve since the 1930s, it is a flyway for migratory birds – and a wetland of international significance. At 25 km (15 miles), it is the longest sandbar in the world and actually lies 80 km

Farewell Spit satellite image
(NASA Earth Observatory)

(50 miles) north of Wellington. Some of the 90 species of birds that frequent the area are bar tailed godwits, knots, curlews, pied oyster catchers, pied stilts, black swan, dotterels and Australasian gannets. The Farewell Spit lighthouse was originally built in 1870 and is now automated (like all the lighthouses in NZ); the lighthouse buildings are preserved with interpretive displays. The guided tours of the area typically have a lunch break at the lighthouse grounds. You can climb the steps to the top and get great views all around. Access to the spit is through the Puponga Farm Park, but without joining one of the two guiding companies (see below), you can only walk 3½ km out.



Godwits wading

If you are self-guiding, park at the Puponga car park, and visit the Puponga Visitor Centre. There are interpretive displays about the area, including an incredibly sad photo-documentary about the mass whale-stranding in 1991 (335 whales were stranded). At the visitor center, you can use powerful binoculars to view wading and shore birds.

Within the Puponga Farm Park, there are some very good walks. Follow Whaririki Road until it ends, and climb the hill over to the beach. Along Whaririki Beach, there are tre-

mendous dunes, caves, overhanging cliffs and great views of the Archway Islands. It's a fantastic place to spend a day.

Warning: *Don't even consider going to Whahariki Beach if a westerly is blowing – you will be sand-blasted.*

Guided Options

The Original Farewell Spit Safari takes tours out to the lighthouse and/or gannet colony, leaving daily at times determined by tide. It's a fun, entertaining trip, filled with bird spotting, story telling and stopping to play on the beach. From $60 adults. www.farewellspit.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-524-8257.

Farewell Spit Nature Tours goes to the lighthouse but not the gannet colony; otherwise, it makes similar stops along the way. $75 adults, $45 children. www.farewell-spit.co.nz, ☎ 03-524-8188 or 0800-250-500, fax 03-524-8091, www.farewell-spit.co.nz.

Barefoot Guided Tours don't go out to Farewell Spit, but are a good option if you don't have a vehicle or don't want to drive your own car to spots around Golden Bay. They head out to Whahariki Beach, the Quartz Range Swing Bridge and more. Operated in conjunction with the folks at Somerset Backpackers. www.bare-foot.co.nz, ☎ 0508-525-700.

Adventures

ON HORSES

Cape Farewell Horse Treks leads fabulous rides of any length from a couple hours to multi-day. Depending on the ride, you can go up onto the ridges for incredibly long views of Farewell Spit and beyond, or along the beaches for a sandy gallop and cave exploration on Whahariki Beach. Multi-day rides can go along the beach or into the bush. www.horsetreksnz.com, ☎ 03-524-8031.

Where to Stay

Somerset Backpackers is a comfortable and friendly place to stay, with staff knowledgeable about local activities, and happy to arrange adventures. It's on the hill and the wrap-around porch is a great place to sit and read or drink a glass of wine. www.backpackerscollingwood.co.nz, ☎ 03-524-8327 ($).

A small accommodation, the Old Post Office caters to small numbers of guests. Right in town. jacklee@xtra.co.nz, Tasman Street, ☎ 03-524-8963 ($).

Skara Brae is a small motel and B&B set in a lovely garden. www.accommodationcollingwood.co.nz, Elizabeth Street, ☎ 03-524-8464, fax 03-524-8474 ($$$).

Pakawau Beach Park is right on the beach, and has a small shop, gas station, tourist cabins and motel units. ☎ 03-524-8327 ($-$$).

Where to Eat

There aren't too many choices, but the Courthouse Café is fully licensed and has the best food and coffee. On the corner of Tasman Street and Haven Road ($$).

The Collingwood Tavern has bar and bistro meals. Tasman Street ($).

Rosy Glow Chocolates is a must-stop. All chocolates are handmade and they're not trying to be a big business – they just make chocolates that owner Mary Taylor remembers from childhood. Beach Road, Collingwood, ☎ 03-524-8348.

Abel Tasman National Park

The Abel Tasman National Park, named for Dutch explorer Abel Tasman, is the smallest national park in New Zealand, but has one of the biggest reputations. It's about golden sand and fairly easy-going walking and kayaking; for those who don't want to exert themselves, there are scenic boat trips, and you can arrange to helicopter in to the more posh accommodations.

◆ Getting Here

Marahau, 90 minutes from Nelson, is the gateway to the Abel Tasman Track. Here, you'll find a parking lot, an information kiosk, a

number of accommodations, all sorts of kayak companies, and a few places to eat. Kaiteriteri is on the coast a few km before Marahau and, while not in the park, is home to many kayak companies, water taxi services and tour companies. In Totaranui, at the Golden Bay end of the park, there is also a car park, an information center and camping areas.

◆ Adventures

On Water

If you're looking for a scenic boat ride, opt for the Abel Tasman Wilson's Experience... they're have a good range of trips on large vessels with food and drink available on board. www.abeltasmannz.com, based at Kaiteriteri, ☎ 0800-223-582.

Aqua Taxi can transfer you and/or your gear to most of the destinations along the coast. www.aquataxis.co.nz, Marahau, ☎ 03-527-8083 or 0800-278-282.

For an unforgettable experience, go with Abel Tasman Seal Swim. Leaving from Kaiteriteri, the trip takes you on a 45-minute boat ride out to Tonga Island seal colony followed by a one-hour swim with the seals. You can add a walk or kayak option to your trip. Prices begin at $100 to swim, $60 to watch. www.sealswim.com, ☎ 03-527-8383 or 0800-252-925.

KAYAKING

Most of the outfitters listed rent kayaks and equipment for one or multiple days, assuming you have a bit of experience and are not kayaking solo.Kayaks are a fabulous way to travel and camp – you can stuff a truckload of gear into them and you don't have to carry anything on your back.

Guided kayak trips leave from either Kaiteriteri or Marahau. Most companies offer similars options – day-trips out to Split Apple Rock and some of the islands, with lunch on a beach; to Tonga Island Marine Reserve; or to and from different spots along the coast. Most of them are catered (lunch is usually very good and vegetarian is always an option). Most of the companies also offer multi-day trips,

with camping out for one or two nights and most of them combine a kayak/walk option. I've never heard anything bad about any of the companies and, with so much competition, they really do have to stay on top of their game. Trips do fill up, so it pays to book a day or two in advance, or to be flexible with your schedule.

It's a gorgeous stretch of coast to explore and the golden sand beaches and clear water are hard to beat. On all the trips, you need to bring a hat, sunscreen, warm clothes to change into, and shoes that can get wet. Trips start about $65 for a half-day, $95 for a full day.

Guided Options

From Kaiteriteri: Kaiteriteri Kayak, www.seakayak.co.nz, ☎ 03-527-8383 or 0800-252-925; Kayak Tasman, ☎ 0800-527-8225; and Kiwi Kayaks, www.kiwikayaks.co.nz, ☎ 03-528-7705 or 0800-695-494. Abel Tasman Wilson's Experiences has a day-trip that starts with a scenic water taxi ride from Kaiteriteri to Torrent Bay and avoids the mad dash of other kayakers. www.abeltasmannz.com, ☎ 03-528-7801 or 0800-223-582.

From Marahau: Southern Exposure, www.southern-exposure.co.nz, ☎ 03-527-8424 or 0800-695-292. Ocean River www.seakayaking.co.nz, ☎ 03-527-8266 or 0800-732-529. Marahau Sea Kayaks, www.msk.net.nz, ☎ 03-527-8176 or 0800-808-018. The Sea Kayak Company, www.seakayaknz.co.nz, ☎ 03-528-7251 or 0508-252-925. Abel Tasman Kayaks, www.abeltasmankayaks.co.nz, ☎ 03-537-8022 or 0800-732-529.

For something more traditional, try a canoeing or sea kayaking trip with Waka Tours, daily from 9 am to 1 pm; they also run twilight tours on demand. It's pretty cool and you won't do it anywhere else. $135 adults, $115 children. www.wakatours.co.nz, Kaiteriteri Beach, ☎ 03-527-8160.

Another great option is to go sailing with Abel Tasman Sailing Adventures. They have relaxing day-trips and learn-to-sail courses, as well as pick-ups along the track and one-way fares – a fabulous option to begin or end your walk. Prices begin at $45. www.sailingadventures.co.nz, ☎ 03-527-8375 or 0800-467-245.

On Foot

The Abel Tasman Track has both an inland and a coastal option, with the grand majority of trampers opting for the coastal route. It is one of the loveliest walks around, and wanders not only through long stands of undulating bush, but along the water on golden-sand beaches. Due to popularity, there are often more walkers on the track than bunks in the huts – so take a tent along. I think this is a superior option, anyway, as there are about 20 designated camping areas. The track operates on a booking system; check with DoC before setting out.

Tip: *Many stretches of the coastal track are tidal – make sure you check with DoC or an information center to find out tide times and plan your trip accordingly. This is especially important around Awaroa. If low tide is in the morning, it is best to walk the track from south to north; if low tide is in the afternoon, plan your trip from north to south. Subtract 20 minutes from Nelson tides, but you may as well confirm the times when you book your walk.*

Excess luggage can be transported by bus between Marahau, Nelson and Takaka. Check with the information center for details. A water taxi service is available for transporting packs on the track, but I don't really recommend it as the packs are dropped off at your desired location, where there may or may not be any type of security. I think it's best to carry your pack and to ship onward or store anything not needed.

The coastal track is 51 km (32 miles) long and from Marahau to Wainui takes a total of about 16 hours. You can break up the walk in countless ways, especially if you are carrying a tent. Water-taxi services operate from Marahau to Totaranui, but my favorite section of the track is from Totaranui north. I like exploring the part of the track that isn't accessible by water taxi, because they aren't so busy and I

think the rocks at Separation Point are perfect for sunbathing. There are also some remote sandy beaches at the top.

One option is to walk a loop from Totaranui around the top, stay a night at Whariwharangi Homestead Hut and then come back to Totaranui by way of the inland track. From your return at Totaranui, you can then head south all the way to Marahua or be picked up at a point along the way. Or do it the other direction, beginning in Marahua and being picked up by water taxi at Totaranui.

Guided Options

Abel Tasman Wilson's Experiences offers fully supported, all-inclusive walks. Accommodation is in private lodges, and group size is limited to 22. The lodge at Awaroa is the Wilson family homestead, a lovely old home filled with the history of a large and interesting family. The second lodge, at Torrent Bay, is spacious and warm, with lovely decks and gardens. All rooms in both lodges have en-suite bathrooms and the meals are fabulous. Luggage is transported, so you only need to carry a day-pack. The Abel Tasman is not the kind of track that requires a guide, but if you want to join a group, meet some people, not worry about food, and have a more upmarket experience, Wilson's does a fantastic job. www.abeltasmannz.com, ☎ 03-528-7801 or 0800-223-582.

◆ Where to Stay

In the Park

There are huts at Anchorage, Bark Bay, Awaroa and Whariwharangi Homestead. They all sleep at least 20 and have stoves for heat. There are camping areas all along the track, with the majority on the southern end.

Anchorage Bay is the only safe anchorage along the track and there are two backpacker options on boats. The MV *Etosha* is a large catamaran with private and single share cabins. Meals and kayak rentals are available on the boat. catinthepark@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 0800-386-742 ($). Aquapackers is an ex-Navy patrol boat with 14 dorm beds, hot showers and full kitchen. Dinner, bed, lunch and breakfast. www.

aquapackers.co.nz, ☎ 027-230-7446 or 025-510-882 or 0800-430-744 ($-$$).

Awaroa Lodge in Awaroa Bay is a fabulous accommodation that recently underwent a massive renovation. Options range from studio units to incredible suites – all scattered around the beautiful grounds. The restaurant is definitely worth a stop for a snack or a meal even if you're not staying. Make lunch or dinner here a reward for walking the track. www.awaroalodge.co.nz, ☎ 03-528-8758 ($$$-$$$$).

Marahau

Abel Tasman Marahau Lodge has rooms with bath and kitchen plus studio apartments and a communal kitchen. There is also a spa and sauna. www.abeltasmanmarahaulodge.co.nz, ☎ 03-527-8250, fax 03-527-8258 ($$$).

You can find homestay bed and breakfast, motel, and cottage options at Abel Tasman Stables. www.abeltasmanstables.co.nz, Marahau Valley Road, ☎/fax 03-527-8181 ($$-$$$).

The Barn has a few funky choices – backpacker hostel (dorm, twin or double), housetruck, tipi, or hammock in the trees. It's good, close to the track and has a small camp store. Harvey Road, ☎ 03-527-8043 ($).

The name describes it at Old Macdonalds Farm, where there are animals as well as studio units, cabins, camper and tent sites, and backpackers cabins. It's also home to the Gumdrop café and swimming holes. www.oldmacs.co.nz, Harveys Road, ☎ 03-527-8288, fax 03-527-8289 ($-$$).

Southern Exposure Sea Kayaking also has backpacker accommodation and a campground. www.southern-exposure.co.nz, ☎ 03-527-8424 ($).

Kaiteriteri

Kimi Ora Spa Resort is high on my list of great places to stay. The accommodation (bed & breakfast) is in cabins that are sprinkled around the grounds. There are walking tracks through the bush, tennis courts, a vegetarian restaurant and an extensive sharing library. But the real draw is the health spa, where there are plenty of options on the menu, from body massage and exfoliating wraps to mud treatments and oxygen therapy. www.kimiora.com, ☎ 03-527-8027 or 0508-546-4672 ($$$).

Kaiteriteri Beach Motor Camp is right across from the beach, has a general store, campsites and cabins, some with en-suite bathroom. kaiteritericamp@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-527-8010 ($-$$).

Kaiteri Flashpackers is a motel-like backpacker hostel right across from the beach; it's a brand new place, many rooms have en-suite bathrooms, and there is a bar and restaurant that has wood-fired pizza. www.kaiteriflashpackers.co.nz, ☎ 03-527-8281 or 0508-352-747 ($).

◆ Where to Eat

Hooked on Marahau is open from breakfast through to dinner (fabulous dinner menu with lots of seafood, but book in advance). There is a good café menu for the whole day, plus good coffee and pleasant outdoor seating. Packed lunches also available. ☎ 03-527-8576 ($-$$).

The Park Café at the park entrance. It has good café food and packed lunches available. Marahau, ☎ 03-527-8270 ($-$$).

Kahurangi National Park

At over one million acres, Kahurangi is one of the largest of New Zealand's national parks and was only designated in 1996. Its features include an incredible limestone-and-marble cave system, glacial lakes and alpine mountains. Maori are believed to have inhabited parts of the area from the 14th century and they are believed to have traveled its coast in search of greenstone (pounamu). Because of its vastness, there are vegetation changes from one side to the other. The east is punctuated by beech forest, the west by podocarp with vines, ferns and shrubs, and on the coast there are large stands of Nikau palm. A park of superlatives, it is home to the largest cave spider and the great spotted kiwi, as well as the smallest weta and the tiny rock wren. There are more than 570 km

(350 miles) of walking and tramping tracks in the park, including the Heaphy Track, one of New Zealand's Great Walks, and the very popular Wangapeka Track.

New Zealand's oldest fossil – 540 million years old – was found in Kahurangi National Park.

◆ Getting Here

Depending on where in the park you want to explore, access is from Collingwood (to the beginning of the Heaphy Track), from the Cobb Valley, South of Takaka (to the alpine regions), and from Tapawera (to the Wangapeka).

◆ Information Sources

Contact DoC in either Motueka (motuekaAO@doc.govt.nz, corner of King Edward and High Streets, ☎ 03-528-1810) or Takaka (goldenbayAO@doc.govt.nz, 62 Commercial Street, ☎ 03-525-8026).

◆ Great Walks

The Heaphy Track is one of New Zealand's official Great Walks. It is 82 km (51 miles), takes four to five days and is a mountain-to-sea walk. It begins at the junction of the Brown and Aorere rivers and travels over tussock, through the forest and to the Tasman Sea. Flora that you'll see along the way include red tussock, beech, flax, rimu, miro, kahikatea, matai, rata, mahoe, kamahi and pukatea. On the coast, there are fabulous stands of Nikau palms and great examples of vines. Bird life on the track is tui, weka, bellbird, wood pigeon and robin. The highest point on the track is Flanagan's Corner at 915 meters (2,970 feet).

There are seven huts on the track, making planning an individual decision – many of

The Track, along the Heaphy River

Heaphy Track through Gouland Downs

them are only one to two hours apart and all have bunks, heating, water and toilets. There are gas cookers in all but the Brown and Gouland Downs huts, but it is best to carry your own cooker. There are six designated campsites and passes need to be purchased for either the huts or the campsites before entering the track. Keep your pass visible at all times.

Because the beginning and end of the track are so far away from each other, transport has been a bit of a nightmare, but more options are available now. While more costly, transport by air can be arranged through Flight Corporation, allowing you to return to your starting point – an important consideration if you left a car at the other end. From Karamea to Nelson, $165; from Karamea to Takaka, $150. www.flightcorp.co.nz, ☎ 03-547-8175, 0800-359-464.

Drive Me Wild Expectations provides scheduled transport to both ends of the track, as well as gear rental, hut passes and luggage storage. www.drivemewild.co.nz, ☎ 03-546-8876 0800-945-369, rates from $115 per person.

Trek Express provides transport for the various walks in the National Park, including the Heaphy. rorymoore@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 0800-128-735, fax 03-540-2042.

Guided Options in the Kahurangi

The following operators provide catered guide services on the Heaphy Track and other tracks within the National Park. Keep in mind that guided operators can not operate on the Heaphy from December 20 through January, or at Easter.

Adventure Guides and Southern Wilderness NZ, www.adventureguidesnz.com, ☎ 03-520-3095 or 0800-266-266.

Bush & Beyond Guided Treks, www.naturetreks.co.nz, ☎ 03-528-9054.

Kahurangi Guided Walks, www.kahurangiwalks.co.nz, ☎ 0800-264-156.

Nelson Lakes National Park

Of all the places I've been tramping in New Zealand, the Nelson Lakes National Park rates as my favorite. It's easy to get to, you can choose an easy or challenging track, a short or long trip, stay in huts or camp and pass through all kinds of scenery and vegetation. The two beautiful lakes – Rotoiti and Rotoroa – are glacial in origin and edged by beech forest. It's at the northernmost end of the Southern Alps and some of the tracks include alpine passes. The only bad thing about Nelson Lakes is the sand flies, but actually they serve a purpose. If they weren't there in such screaming hoards, the place would be overrun with walkers and

trampers! With them, you have to pay a price to enjoy the fabulous scenery.

◆ Getting Here

Easy. Walks and lakes are accessed from St. Arnaud on the north shore of Lake Rotoiti. From Blenheim, take SH63 to St. Arnaud, it's about an hour and a half. From Nelson (118 km/73 miles), also an hour and a half, head up SH6 to Belgrove and then take the Golden Downs road to Tophouse, and head west on SH63 to St. Arnaud. From Motueka, travel SH61 along the Motueka River, through the lovely Tapawera Valley to Korere, then take the turnoff to Tophouse. From Murchison, it's straight down SH63. Shuttle buses call in on their way from Blenheim to the West Coast and back.

◆ Information Sources

The St. Arnaud Area Department of Conservation is a fabulous field center with conservation displays on Nelson Lakes National Park (including audio-visual), and last-minute tramping supplies (like pack liners). Call in here regardless of the length of walk you're doing, but be sure to file your intentions for the longer walks. www.doc.govt.nz, ☎ 03-521-1806, 03-521-1896.

◆ Walks

There are a variety of short and long walks that leave from St. Arnaud. The Peninsula Nature Walk takes 1½ hours and it's a very popular way to stretch the legs.

One favorite walk edges Lake Rotoiti – you can go to the Lakehead or Coldwater huts and spend the night, or just walk as far in as you like and then back. If you choose to spend the night, the walk loops around the lake, making a nice two-day trip.

My favorite tramp in Nelson Lakes is the Travers-Sabine Circuit, 80 km (50 miles), taking four to six days. Five days, with one day on a side-trip to Blue Lake, is a perfect trip. The tramp goes through beech forest, scrub, river flats, and steep climbs. The Travers Saddle is an alpine pass, so be prepared. Huts have water, toilets, and wood fire places.

Lake Rotoroa has some walking tracks, but is the quieter of the two and popular mostly for fishing.

Water taxis can be booked at ☎ 03-521-1894 for Lake Rotoiti, and ☎ 03-523-9199 for Lake Rotoroa.

◆ Where to Stay in St. Arnaud

Alpine Chalet and Lodge has dorms, motel rooms with bath and kitchen, and family-style apartments, as well as a full-service restaurant and bar. www.alpinelodge.co.nz, ☎ 03-521-1869 or 0800-367-777, fax 03-521-1868 ($-$$$).

The Yellow House is the YHA option in St. Arnaud and has doubles, twins, and family-style rooms. The folks are very friendly, there's a big kitchen and they have tramping equipment for rent. www.yha.org.nz, ☎ 03-521-1887, fax 03-521-1882 ($).

St. Arnaud Log Chalets are cheerful accommodations with bath and kitchen, operated by the same people as the Yellow House. info@nelsonlakes.co.nz, ☎ 03-521-1887, fax 03-521-1882 ($$).

Murchison

Heading to the west from St. Arnaud on SH6, the next town of any size is Murchison (60 km/36 miles), on the banks of the Buller River. About 20 km (12 miles) before Murchison is Owen River, at the south end of the Kahurangi National Park. The Owen and Buller are popular rivers for whitewater rafting and kayaking.

◆ Information Sources

The Murchison Information Centre provides local and DoC information and makes bookings for DoC huts. 47 Waller Street, ☎/fax 03-523-9350.

◆ Adventures

On Water

With all the rivers nearby, whitewater rafting and kayaking are two of the biggest activities around. Ultimate Descents run full- and half-day raft trips on the Buller – the put-in is just five minutes from the base and, depending on flow, the river is grade III-IV, going through granite canyons and deep gorges. They can also arrange raft trips to the Maruia (two days) and the Clarence (five days); or heli-rafting to the

more remote Karamea and Mokihinui. Closer to home and bit easier are the inflatable, sit-on-top kayak trips – with different kayaks to suit your ability. www.rivers.co.nz, ☎ 03-523-9899.

The other rafting company in town is the smaller White Water Action. They also have full- and half-day trips in rafts and on inflatable kayaks and lead multi-day and remote trips to other rivers. adventure.tours@xtra.co.nz, Main Road, behind the information center, ☎ 03-523-9581 or 0800-100-582.

◆ Where to Stay

The Commercial Hotel has pub rooms away from the pub noise. ☎ 03-523-9490 ($-$$).

The Murchison Motel is a small (six-unit) place, but the same owners also have two-bedroom apartments with bath and kitchen and a three-bedroom riverside house available. All at very reasonable prices. www.murchisonmotels.co.nz, 53 Fairfax Street, ☎ 03-523-9026 or 0800-166-500, fax 03-523-9298 ($$).

Kiwi-Park Motel and Holiday Park has tent and power sites as well as cabins, tourist apartments and very good motel units. Everything is clean and the folks are friendly. 170 Fairfax Street, ☎ 03-523-9248 ($-$$$).

The Lazy Cow is a new backpacker hostel in a home. There are doubles, singles and dorms (five rooms in all). lazycow@paradise.net.nz, ☎ 0800-529-9269 ($).

◆ Where to Eat

In addition to a couple of takeout shops, your choices are really limited to the following.

Rivers Café is a cool, funky place to get a meal. It's at the base for Ultimate Descents. 51 Fairfax Street, ☎ 03-523-9009 ($-$$).

The Commercial Hotel has bistro meals and is the best place in town for a good dinner. SH6, ☎ 03-523-9696 ($$-$$$).

Beechwoods Wayside Rest is a café that caters to tourists and is always busy and loud. SH6 ($-$$).

West Coast

Introduction

Long before the Europeans came to the West Coast in search of gold, the Maori came in search of *pounamu* or greenstone. Used for cutting tools, weapons and adornment, it's still a valuable commodity and you'll find evidence of it all along the West Coast. The West Coast stretches for 550 km (341 miles), but is only about 30 km (19 miles) wide. The scenery is amazing, with the Southern Alps extending nearly the entire length.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Getting Here 269
- Information Sources 269
- Buller Gorge to Westport 270
- Inland to Greymouth 270
- Westport North to Karamea 271
- Punakaiki & Paparoa Natl Park 280
- Greymouth to Hokitika 283
- Hokitika to the Glaciers 287
- The Glaciers to Haast 299
- The Haast Pass 302

It's a region of rainforests, glaciers, gold and coal mines. The gold was found first (and in large quantities), while the coal, which is still being mined, came later. Dairying is a big industry and, recently, so is growing and exporting sphagnum moss.

The Tasman Sea whips into a fury but can also be calm and gentle; so too can the weather be a bit of a challenge. It rains over here, and much of the scenery is due to rain – you can't have all this green and all of these rivers and waterfalls without a lot of the wet stuff! It might pay to carry an umbrella or waterproof jacket, but don't let the rain stand in the way of getting out and enjoying the place – many of the bush walks are under canopy and there is no more spectacular time to visit the rain forest than when it's a bit misty or rainy.

And how about those sand flies? They're miserable and we all know it, but, if you apply sand fly repellent and keep your skin covered, you'll be less bothered. If you do get bitten (and chances are you will), pick up some antihistamine or anti-itch cream at the drugstore.

Take care: *The West Coast is noted for its unsafe swimming beaches. Before you go into the surf, get some local knowledge.*

Northern Alps
1. Heaphy Track, Heaphy Bluff
2. Karamea Gorge
3. Charming Creek Walk
4. Denniston Walkway
5. Ariki Falls
6. Upper Buller Gorge
7. Maruia Falls
8. Hawk's Crag
9. Tauranga Bay Seal Colony, Cape Foulwind Walk, Lighthouse, Carters & Nine Mile Beaches
10. Murray's Creek Goldfield Walk
11. Big River Track
12. Inland Pack Track
13. Dolomite Point, Blowholes, Pancake Rocks
14. Croesus Track
15. Point Elizabeth Walkway
16. Jungle Boat Cruises, Wild West Adventure Co., Jade Boulder Gallery, Left Bank Art Gallery, Monteith Brewing Co.
17. Shantytown
18. Waimea Goldfields, Goldsborough Walks
19. Paddleboat Cruise, Canoe & Kayak Trips, Lake Kaniere Walk & Water Race Track, Mahinapua Walk, Carnegie Centre & Art Gallery, West Coast History Museum, Hokitika Craft Gallery
20. Panning at Ross Goldfields
21. Lake Ianthe
22. Okatiro Forest
Tasman Sea
KAHURANGI NATIONAL PARK
Karamea
Market Cross
Karamea Bight
Millerton
Denniston
Cape Foulwind
Westport
Orikaka R
Lyell
Murchison
Buller River
Otikanui River
Reefton
PAPAROA NATIONAL PARK
VICTORIA FOREST PARK
Inangahua River
Waiutu
Grey River
Springs Junction
Barrytown
Greymouth
Stillwater
Moana
Kumara Junction
Lake Brunner
Lake Sumner
Kumara
Jackson
Hokitika
ARTHUR'S PASS NATIONAL PARK
Arthur's Pass
Lake Kaniere
Ross
25 KM
15.5 MILES
Wilberforce R
Pukekura
Ferguson's
Lake Coleridge
Springfield
Whataroa R
Harihari
Rakaia River
Okatiro
Windwhistle
Perth River
Franz Joseph
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Lower Hokitika Valley

23. Alps Panorama, Three Mile Lagoon Walk
24. Lake Mapourika Walk
25. Franz Josef Glacier, Douglas Track
26. Fox Glacier, Glow Worm Dell, Chalet Lookout Walk
27. Lake Matheson Walk, Alps Panorama
28. Gillespies Beach, Seal Colony
29. Copland Track
30. Lakes Paringa & Moeraki
31. Ships Creek
32. Thunder Creek Falls
33. The Gates of Haast
34. Haast Pass, Fantail Falls
35. Mt. Cook, Hooker Glacier Lake & Walk, Blue Lakes Walk
36. Tasman Glacier, Murchison Glacier
37. Godley Glacier
38. Lyell Glacier, Ramsay Glacier

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There's plenty of adventure to be had on the Wild West Coast – from glacier walks to whitewater rafting to cave exploration – and there are countless walking tracks. You can see dolphins, seals, penguins, rare and endangered birds and a carnivorous snail. The bird life in the rain forest is remarkable and the trees. The trees. Reaching sky-high and packed densely on the mountains are rata, rimu, kahikatea, nikau palm, tree ferns, and the list goes on.

Getting Here

◆ By Air

Air New Zealand serves Westport and Hokitika by way of Christchurch.

◆ By Car

SH6 runs almost the entire length of the West Coast. You can reach SH6 either at Westport via SH6 from Nelson; via SH7 from Reefton; via SH73 and Arthurs Pass; or via the Haast Pass. In each section, I've described travel times.

◆ By Bus

The major routes of the West Coast are served by InterCity (Nelson to Haast, including most of the West Coast from Westport south) and Atomic Shuttles (as far north as Greymouth). Other regional operators are listed in the appropriate sections. As with the rest of the country, you can book transport at any information center and most booking agents.

InterCity Coachlines, www.intercitycoach.co.nz, ☎ 03-379-9020.

Atomic Shuttles, www.atomictravel.co.nz, ☎ 03-768-5101 (Greymouth), ☎ 03-789-6658 (Westport).

Information Sources

Local information centers are listed in each section, but for more information about the whole region, take a look at www.west-coast.nz.

The Buller Gorge to Westport

SH6 continues west from Murchison, following the Buller River eventually to its mouth at the Tasman Sea. A quick 11 km (seven miles) from Murchison, you will reach the junction of SH65 – which leads through the lush Maruia Forest to Maruia Junction. Continuing on SH6, though, in another few minutes you'll reach Ariki Falls and then the dense and green Buller Gorge. Farther on, it's into the Inangahua Junction, a region deep with mountains on all sides and one scenic spot after another.

This area has certainly had its share of mining, but the most interesting land activities happened with no prompting from man – the earthquakes in 1929 and 1968 reshaped the land; you can see the evidence at the view of the Inangahua earthquake slip. There's a good car park and walk down to the river – it only takes a few minutes and is a must side-trip.

Inland to Greymouth

From Inangahua at the junction of SH6 and SH69 a trip to Greymouth takes you through the beautiful Inangahua Valley over the mountains and into the Grey Valley. At Ikamatua, you can choose to stay on SH69 or skip across the Grey River and pass through Blackball. Either way, your trip will be cloaked in green. Reefton is pretty much in the center of the Victoria Forest Park, the largest forest park in New Zealand. It came to life during gold mining and now the town and surrounding area is a gem for biking, walking and fishing.

Did you know? *Reefton was the first town in New Zealand to have an electric power supply. Electricity was switched on in August 1888.*

◆ Getting Here

It's about 35 km (22 miles) from Springs Junction to Reefton and takes 30 minutes to drive. To Greymouth, it's 80 km (50 miles) and takes one hour.

◆ Information Sources

The incredibly helpful and friendly Reefton Information Centre, reeftoninfo@paradise.net.nz, is at 67 Broadway, ☎ 03-732-8391, fax 03-732-8616.

The DoC office is in the same location and there is a good display on mining.

◆ Where to Stay

Accommodation in Reefton is not on the fancy side, but you can find comfortable digs at the Reef Cottage Bed & Breakfast and Café. www.reefcottage.co.nz, 51 Broadway, ☎ 03-732-8440 or 0800-770-440 ($$$).

Reefton Auto Lodge has studio units with bath and kitchen and offers fly-fishing packages. www.flyfishingparadise.co.nz, 74 Broadway, ☎ 03-732-8406, fax 03-732-8955 ($$-$$$).

The Bellbird Motel has simple motel units. bellbird@minidata.co.nz, 93 Broadway, ☎ 03-732-8444 or 0800-235-524 ($$).

Reefton Backpackers is nothing fancy but has big rooms with not very many beds in them. It's an old house; the kitchen is fine, the garden is simple. 64 Shiel Street, ☎ 03-732-8383 ($).

◆ Where to Eat

The Reef Café is your best bet for something tasty to go with a decent cup of coffee or for a light meal. 55 Broadway ($).

Café Alfresco would be the next choice and the first choice for pizza. They have (not surprisingly) outdoor seating. 16 Upper Broadway ($).

If you've been searching for a home-cooked roast, go to the Reefton Hotel. They'll fill you up and the food is something like grandma's. 75 Broadway ($).

Westport North to Karamea

If you head north on SH67, you will return the way you came, unless you fly out from Karamea or walk the Heaphy Track to Nelson. Karamea is at the end of the road. Bound on three sides by the Kahurangi National Park and on one side by the Tasman Sea, it is a

special place to visit. There are caves to explore, walks and bike rides to enjoy, beaches to blob out on – it's a great area and one that you shouldn't rush through. The first time I came north of Westport, I figured a day, two days tops. But I stayed more than a week and wished for more time.

◆ Getting Here

By Car

From Westport, it's an 88-km (55-mile) drive to Karamea, which will take you about 1½ hours. About 50 minutes into the drive, you'll reach Hector.

By Bus

The Karamea Express has weekday service between Westport and Karamea. ☎ 03-782-6916.

◆ Information Sources

The Karamea Information and Resource Centre is home to the Karamea Centennial Museum, info@karameainfo.co.nz, at Market Cross, ☎ 03-782-6652, fax 03-782-6654.

◆ Walks

This section of the West Coast is filled with coal mines – the town of Denniston (historically the biggest producing area) is but a ghost town now, and can be reached by the Denniston Walkway, which takes two or three hours and has a bit of a climb to it. There are countless little walking tracks on the old mining roads. The best advice that I can give you is to ask at the DoC office in Westport, the information center in Karamea or to inquire at your hotel. The Millerton Incline Railway Walk is only 10 minutes and not as steep as the Denniston. The Charming Creek Walk is one of my favorites; it is about two hours one-way and follows the old coal rail lines.

For information on the Heaphy Track, see the Nelson chapter, page 259.

Some 45 minutes north of Karamea is the Oparara Valley, home to amazing limestone cave and arch formations, sink holes, bridges, underground streams and carnivorous snails. Head north from

Karamea and follow the signs. Former logging roads are being developed and the K-Road Mountain Bike and Walking Track is the first stage. K-Road is 27 km (17 miles) long and a relatively easy ride or tramp that goes through regenerating forest and has some great views.

The two-tiered 200-meter (650-foot) Oparara Arch is a popular 40-minute walk. Another draw is Mirror Tarn, a reflective lake reached by a 10-minute walk. You can explore Crazy Paving and Box Canyon Caves on your own, but the Honeycomb Cave, which has 70 entrances and over 13 km (eight miles) of passages, can only be visited on a guided trip. It was just discovered in the 1970s and holds skeletons of many bird varieties, including the extinct moa and the Haast eagle You can arrange tours with the Last Resort in Karamea or explore the area on a guided walk or by kayak with Advenures Unlimited, ☎ 03-782-6111.

◆ Where to Stay

Just north of Granity is Hector and The Old Slaughterhouse. This is one of my all-time favorite places to stay in New Zealand. It's on a hill (park at road level and walk up the path, your bags will go up on a quad bike) with fantastic views of the sea. Accommodation is doubles and dorms in buildings set behind the main house, which is open for you to enjoy. There is a fabulous deck and I could sit for days watching the sea. SH67, Hector, ☎ 03-782-8333 ($).

In Karamea, the Last Resort has a broad range of accommodation options in a comfortable, clean and pleasant complex. The roofs are of sod and the buildings are constructed (mainly by hand) of local building materials. Everything from budget rooms to cottages with bath and kitchen. www.lastresort.co.nz, ☎ 03-782-6617 or 0800-505-042, fax 03-782-6820 ($-$$$).

◆ Where to Eat

Remember it's a small town, but you can get coffee, pies and sandwiches while looking at crafts at Saracens ($).

The Karamea Bight Restaurant at the hotel has above-average pub food ($).

The Last Resort has both a restaurant and bar ($).

Westport

While gold might have settled some towns around the South Island, it has been coal that brought Westport, near the mouth of the Buller River, to life. Julius Haast and James Burnett first discovered coal at the in the Papahaua Ranges in 1860; two years later, a detailed survey showed the region to be holding millions of tons of extractable coal. Robert Denniston, for whom one of the biggest mining sites is named, sparked the interest in mining coal and the construction of the Denniston Incline was begun in 1878. It operated for nearly 90 years, bringing coal from many of the sites up in the hills. A visit to the Coaltown Museum will give you a better appreciation of coal mining in the area and of minerals in general. Open daily, 9 am to 4:30 pm. Queen Street, ☎ 03-789-8204.

Pick up a copy of the Buller Coalfields Heritage Trail *before you head north – it points out 10 spots that were instrumental in the coal mining industry of this area.*

◆ Getting Here

By Air

Air New Zealand serves Westport by way of Christchurch.

By Car

Westport's is at the junction of SH67 and SH6. From Nelson, the 230-km (143-mile) drive will take you just under four hours; from Greymouth, it's about 105 km (65 miles) and a drive of an hour and 45 minutes. A straight shot from Christchurch is 335 km (208 miles), a bit over five hours.

By Bus

InterCity Coachlines connects Westport with Nelson and points south on the West Coast. East West Shuttles, ☎ 03-789-6251, runs between Westport and Christchurch and the Karamea Express, ☎ 03-782-6916, has weekday service between Westport and Karamea.

◆ Information Sources

Check out www.westport.org.nz for more information on this area.

The extremely helpful Visitor Information Centre is open daily with later hours in the summer. Contact them for Heaphy Track information. westport.info@xtra.co.nz, 1 Brougham Street, ☎ 03-789-6658.

The DoC office is at 72 Russell Street and is open weekdays daily from 9 am to 5 pm (closed for lunch), ☎ 03-788-8008.

Tauranga Bay

◆ Adventures

On Foot

The Tauranga Bay Seal Colony is home to up to 300 fur seals. Pups are born during November and December, and they stay on the rocks with their mothers for a good month. It's just a couple of minutes' walk from the car park to the seal colony. The Cape Foulwind Walkway is 90 minutes one-way; it passes past the seal colony along the cliffs and has an optional trip to the lighthouse. The name comes from Captain Cook, who arrived here in bad weather, but the walk-

way is not foul at all – in fact, it's quite pleasant, gently rolling and gives good coastal views.

On 4x4

Outwest Tours runs all sorts of trips around the region, getting out to the back of beyond in a variety of vehicles. www.outwest.co.nz, ☎ 0800-688-937.

◆ Where to Stay

The Bella Vista Motel is new and tidy and has very modern rooms with bath and kitchen. www.bellavistamotels.co.nz, 314 Palmerston Street, ☎ 03-789-7800 or 0800-493-787, fax 03-789-8110 ($$-$$$).

At Cape Foulwind, you can stay in a studio at the Omau Settlers Lodge Motel. Breakfast is included and everything is new and clean. thecape@xtra.co.nz, Cape Foulwind, ☎ 03-789-5200 or 0800-466-287, fax 03-789-5600 ($$-$$$).

Robyn's Nest Hostel is a converted old house with a big porch and kitchen, a dog, a cat and interesting old woodwork. There are twins, double, shared-bath units and dorms. www.robynsnest.co.nz, corner of Pakington and Romilly Streets, ☎ 03-789-6565 or 0800-550-109 ($).

Last but not least, the Happy Wanderer has doubles, twins and dorms. They are spread among three buildings and each has its own shared facilities. 56 Russell Street, ☎ 03-789-8627 ($).

There are units with bath and kitchen, deluxe and family suites at the Seal Colony Top 10 Holiday Park. www.sealcolonytouristpark.co.nz, Marine Parade, Carters Beach, ☎ 03-789-8002 or 0508-937-876, fax 03-789-6732 ($-$$).

The Westport Holiday Park has rooms with en-suite bathroom and standard chalets, cabins and motel units, plus tent and power sites. www.westportholidaypark.co.nz, 31 Dormett Street, ☎ 03-789-7043, fax 03-789-7199 ($-$$).

◆ Where to Eat

There is no shortage of quick food and takeout options, but the choice for a good meal that might be a bit more special is The Bay House. They specialize in great food with a contemporary twist and the setting is equally

special. Open daily, 9 am until late. Tauranga Bay, Cape Foulwind, ☎ 03-789-7133 ($-$$).

In town, Percy's is probably your best choice for coffee and a light meal, including vegetarian options. 198 Palmerston Street ($).

The Dennison Dog Saloon is a good spot for wine and beer and fresh New Zealand food. Your in-town dinner choice. 18 Wakefield Street, ☎ 03-789-5030 ($$).

Punakaiki & Paparoa National Park

The drive from Westport to Punakaiki is highlighted by one spectacular view after another. Paparoa National Park became New Zealand's 12th National Park in 1987 and encompasses the area between SH6, SH7, and SH5. It's a grand little triangle that is covered in lowland rainforest – trees like gaint rata, rimu and miro reach for the sun, while nikau palms, tree and ground ferns, supplejack and other vines hug the ground.

Punakaiki Rocks

The Blowholes and Pancake Rocks at Dolomite Point are the most famous features of Paparoa National Park but they are my no means the only features. The blowholes, most fabulous when the tide is high and the swell is coming from the south or southwest, put on an explosive show when water rushes into the caverns below and surges out through small openings, geyser-style. The Pancake Rocks, layer upon layer of limestone, have made it onto just about every New Zealand calendar and postcard collection. They are a fabulous example of how the earth moves and shifts and lifts. There is a

short walk (10 minutes) to view the structures and you'd be wise to heed the warnings on the track.

◆ Information Sources

The Paparoa National Park DoC Visitor Centre is a helpful and interesting stop; it's hard to miss it. punakaikivc@doc.govt.nz, SH6, ☎ 03-731-1895, fax 03-731-1896.

◆ Adventures

Watchable Wildlife

Birds here are abundant, including the lyrical tui and bellbirds and the whoosh-whoosh of the kereru. This is the world's only breeding site of the Westland black petrel. The largest of the burrowing petrels, it spends most of its life at sea and comes home to breed. Contact the DoC office for information on the birds and the possibility of tours.

On Water

Norwest Adventures leads a fantastic Underworld Rafting trip in the Paparoa National Park from their base in Charleston. The trip includes a ride on a train and takes you underground for a float down the Nile River – see stalactites, stalagmites and glow-worms. They can also take you on a tame cave tour or on a more ambitious adventure caving trip. The more sedate can just ride the Charleston Nile River Rainforest Train, which takes 1½ hours and provides access to the caves. Trains depart at 9 am, 11 am, 2:30 pm and 5:30 pm. Bookings for all trips essential. www.caverafting.com, ☎ 03-789-6686 or 0800-116-686.

There are some safe swimming beaches along here and the rivers are good for swimming. The one at the end of the Pororari River is a good bet. Do yourself a favor though and check into DoC for specifics.

Punakaiki Canoes has rentals and guided trips to explore the Pororari River – a fantastic way to get into the forest amid the tree ferns and palms. Guided trips start at $60, rentals at $30. www.riverkayaking.co.nz, by the river, just north of the visitor center, ☎ 03-731-1870.

On Foot

Within the Paparoa National Park are a few good walking tracks, including the Croesus, which crosses the Paparoa Range from Blackball to Barrytown, is 18 km (11 miles) and takes seven to eight hours. There is a hut on the Blackball side and accommodation on the Paparoa side. The recommended route is from Blackball to Paparoa – the western side is steeper and rougher. If you want to take your time or had a late start, the Ces Clark Hut is about halfway.

On Horses

Punakaiki Horse Treks go through the valley and along the beach. There is nothing that beats riding a horse on the beach and this is one incredible spot to do it. From $95. www.pancake-rocks.co.nz, ☎ 03-731-1839, fax 03-731-1838.

◆ Where to Stay

Paparoa Park Motel has studio units set amid the bush, with great views of the sea. www.paparoa.co.nz, SH6 one km (less than a mile) south of Pancake Rocks, ☎ 03-731-1883 or 0800-727-276 ($$).

Punakaiki Cottage Motel is on the beach and has studio and family units. ☎ 03-731-1008, fax 03-731-1118 ($$-$$$).

Punakaiki Rocks Hotel is a large accommodation right near the Blowholes. They've tried to design and build the space to blend into and respect the environment. www.scenic-circle.co.nz, ☎ 03-731-1844 ($$$$).

Te Nikau Retreat is a special place and a great accommodation option. Fresh bread and muffins. It's gorgeous, but be sure to book in advance – it's small and fills up quickly. Three km (two miles) north of Pancake Rocks, turn down Hartmount Place, ☎ 03-731-1111, fax 03-731-1102 ($).

The Punakaiki Beach Hostel is a comfortable and pleasant place to stay right by the beach. Great spa and views. www.punakaikibeachhostel.co.nz, Webb Street, ☎ 03-731-1852 ($).

◆ Where to Eat

You can grab a coffee and a light snack to eat outside at Punakaiki Crafts, SH6 ($).

The Wild West Café has indoor and outdoor seating and a café menu. Next to Punakaiki Crafts ($).

The Punakaiki Tavern has the broadest range of food and the best value for money. By the campground, two minutes north of Pancake Rocks ($).

Punakaiki to Greymouth

This is a drive that you'll remember – with the wild coast on one side and the massive Paparoa Ranges on the other. Midway between Punakaiki and Greymouth is Barrytown, a small former gold mining town that now boasts a pub, the Barrytown Tavern, where you can get a meal and a bed ($). This is where the Croesus Track comes out (see Punakaiki and Paparoa National Park section, page 277 ff. for details). You can also have a meal at the Rata Café ($).

Continuing farther south, you'll reach Rapahoe and Runanga (about seven km/four miles) north of Greymouth. The Point Elizabeth Walkway is a popular four-hour round-trip through the Rapahoe Scenic Range. It begins at Rapahoe (near Seven Mile Creek) and follows the coast south to Cobden Beach. If low tide is at the right time, you can return on the beach. Ask at the information center for tide times. The beach at Rapahoe is usually safe for swimming, but inquire at the hotel or motor camp to be sure of conditions.

You can find accommodation at the Rapahoe Hotel, at the north end of the walkway, ☎ 03-762-7701 ($).

Rapahoe Beach Motor Camp has cabins and sites, a safe swimming beach, swimming pool and walking tracks. rapahoebeach@actrix.co.nz, ☎ 03-762-7025 or 0508-465-432 ($).

Greymouth

At the mouth of the Grey River, Greymouth was once known as Mawhera and was the site of a Maori pa. When gold was discovered in the 1860s, so, too, was Greytown. The largest town on the West Coast, it is the service center for the area. The Grey River plays

a mighty role in daily life – especially so after times of heavy rain when it is prone to overflow its banks and flood the town.

◆ Getting Here

By Air

Greymouth is served by the airports in Hokitika and Westport.

By Car

Greymouth is about 335 km (208 miles) and nearly six hours from Haast and 554 km (344 miles) and 11 hours from Queenstown. It's 255 km (158 miles) from Christchurch, a drive that will take you four hours.

Greymouth Port

From Blenheim, it's 331 km (205 miles) and takes five hours. SH6 runs north and south through Greymouth; SH7 comes through from the Ikamatua Valley; and SH73 joins SH1 from Arthur's Pass midway to Hokitika.

By Bus

InterCity Coachlines and Atomic Shuttles service the north- and south-bound routes.

Additionally, Alpine Coaches run between Hokitika and Christchurch with stops along the way. www.alpinecoaches.co.nz, ☎ 0800-274-888, and Coast to Coast connects the two sides, as well. ☎ 0800-800-847.

By Train

The TranzAlpine arrives from Christchurch about 12:45 pm each day and departs on its return trip at 1:45 pm. See the Canterbury chapter (Selwyn section, page 329) for details.

◆ Information Sources

Take a look at www.westcoastbookings.co.nz.

The Greymouth Visitor Centre, vingm@minidata.co.nz, is located at the corner of Herbert and Mackay streets, ☎ 03-768-5101 or 0800-473-966, fax 03-768-0317.

◆ Adventures

On Water

You can pick either an easy float or a more extreme whitewater trip with Eco-Rafting. They offer half-day trips on the Arnold River (raft or sit-on-top kayaks), full-day trips on the Grey or Buller, heli-rafting on the Hokitika, Whitcombe, Whataroa, Perth and Wanganui and multi-day trips on the Grey and Buller. Prices begin at $80, $230 for heli-rafting and $400 for multi-day. www.ecorafting.co.nz, or go see them at 108 Mawhera Quay, ☎ 03-768-4005.

Really fun black water rafting (tubing) can be had with Wild West Adventures on their Dragons Blackwater Cave Tubing. You get outfitted in a wetsuit, boots and a helmet and then it's into the cave, where you float, jump, squeeze and laugh your way through the cave system. $125, $195 if you add the abseiling option. 8 Whall Street, ☎ 03-768-6649 or 0508-372-466.

On 4x4

On Yer Bike! runs quad-bike adventures in the mud and wet. Rides from one hour to 90 minutes, prices begin at $70 adults, $60 children. Eight-wheel, all-wheel-drive, amphibious Argo rides also available for 30 and 60 minutes. $30/$55 adults, $10/$20 children. They have pint-sized bikes for six to12 year olds at $5 per five minutes. www.onyerbike.co.nz, 511 SH6, 5 km north of Greymouth. ☎ 03-762-7438 or 0800-669-372.

In the Air

Air West Coast Ltd. runs scenic flights around the West Coast, Mt. Cook and Fiordlands. They also offer passenger services to and from Wellington. www.airwestcoast.co.nz, Aerodrome Road, ☎ 03-738-0524.

Coastwide Helicopters Ltd. provides scenic service around the West Coast, including trips to Punakaiki. ☎ 03-768-6117.

◆ Where to Stay

Gables Motor Lodge is the snazziest, with studios and one- and two-bedroom units. www.nzmotels.co.nz/gables, 84 High Street, ☎ 03-768-9991 or 0800-809-991, fax 03-768-9992 ($$-$$$).

Plenty of motel options exist, including Charles Court. www.charlescourtmotel.co.nz, 350 Main Street, ☎ 03-762-6619 or 0800-800-619 ($$-$$$)..

The High Park Motor Inn has studios and apartments. www.highpark.co.nz, 90 High Street, ☎ 03-768-4846 or 0800-844-846, fax 03-768-9746 ($$-$$$).

Neptunes International Backpackers has beds, not bunks, in bright and spacious rooms, with a lounge and outdoor area. nepts.backpacker@actrix.co.nz, 43 Gresson Street, ☎ 03-768-4425 ($).

The Kainga-Ra YHA is in a former Catholic priest's house and has dorm beds. Easygoing and funky. 15 Alexander Street, ☎ 03-768-4951 ($).

◆ Where to Eat

There are a few places to grab a meal around town and The Smelting House Café has good, healthy café food, including paninis, salads and bagels. They also make fresh smoothies. 102 Makay Street ($).

Dp:One Café has a funky name and atmosphere – books, videos, live music, as well as good food and coffee. 108 Mawhera Quay ($).

You won't leave th Hogs Head Bar & Grill hungry, that's for sure. Big food including meat, lasagna, and a mean seafood chowder. 9 Tainui Street ($-$$).

From Greymouth to Hokitika

Some of the most amazing sea views in New Zealand are along SH6 between Greymouth and Hokitika. Just 11 km (seven miles)

Shantytown

south of Greymouth is Shantytown, a recreation of a gold mining town. There are plenty of restored buildings to poke around in and kids will probably enjoy the theatrics of it all. Your paid entry to Shantytown includes a ride on one of the three steam trains. $15 adults, $7.50 children, including gold panning; $12 adults, $3 children, without the gold panning. Open 8:30 am to 5 pm daily. Follow the signs; it's about four km (two miles off SH6), ☎ 03-762-6634.

Continuing south on SH6 in another 10 km (six miles) you'll reach the Kumara Junction at SH73, which comes from over Arthurs Pass. Between here and the pass, as the highway snakes along the Taramakau River, are a few notable gold rush sites from the 1840s and 1870s, particularly around the town of Kumara. Kumara is the site of annual horse races in January (quite a draw around the area), the Waimea Goldfields and the Goldsborough walking tracks. This is a quaint mountain settlement where you'll find a couple of country hotels as well as tearooms and a small store.

Hokitika

Like many of the towns on the South Island, Hokitika was settled after the discovery of gold in the 1860s. It became a busy port and the population swelled to 6,000 (currently, it's about 4,000). But before gold, the Arahura and Taramakau rivers were important sources of pounamu (greenstone) for the Maori – and they continue to be.

◆ Getting Here

By Air

Air New Zealand provides domestic service to and from Hokitika by way of Christchurch. www.airnz.co.nz, ☎ 0800-737-000.

By Car

From Greymouth to Hokitika, it's just a 40-minute drive; from Westport, it's about two hours. From Nelson, figure about five hours. From Franz Josef, it'll take you almost two hours, and from Haast, nearly four.

By Bus

The bus lines that serve Greymouth also stop in Hokitika. See page 281.

◆ Information Sources

The Westland Visitor Information Centre, hkkvin@xtra.co.nz, is in the Carnegie Complex, at the corner of Hamilton and Tancred Streets, ☎ 03-755-6166, fax 03-755-5011.

The annual Wildfoods Festival is great fun. Held on the second Saturday in March, it's a celebration of the diversity of food on the West Coast. You'll be able to try all sorts of things. The festival is held on a Saturday. Be warned – the town gets book solid so, if you want to attend, arrange for your accommodation in advance. Check www.westlanddc.govt.nz for the current calendar.

◆ Adventures

On the Water

River Play is a fun company with both rafting and inflatable-kayak trips. Adventure kayak trips include 4x4 ride and bush walk to the river and then inflatable kayaks on grade II to III rapids – these kayaks allow first-timers to go down the rapids safely and easily. They also offer heli-rafting to the Arahura and Karamea Rivers and half-day to three-day Buller River trips. ☎ 03-755-5339 or 0800-116-348.

Due West Canoe Safaris leads one-day and multi-day trips around the West Coast, including trips out to the gorge and moonlight paddles. Prices begin at $80 and they're happy to customize a trip for you. www.duewest.co.nz, 209 Revell Street, ☎ 03-755-6717 or 0800-383-9378.

On Foot

There are quite a few good walks around Hokitika and a few that you have to ferret out of the locals (stay at Blue Spur Lodge; Keith knows them all – see below). There are a couple of particularly good ones around Lake Kaniere. The Kaniere Water Race Track takes about three hours one-way and goes along through the bush and regenerating forest. It leaves from the lake and has a bit of a climb; the flat Lake Kaniere Walkway takes about four hours along the western shores of the lake. It's all in the forest but the start and finish are 10 km (six miles) apart – contact DoC for details.

A shorter option, the Mahinapua Walkway only takes two hours and is just south of town.

In the Air

Scenic flights around the West Coast can be arranged through Wilderness Wings Ltd, ☎ 03-755-8118.

◆ Where to Stay

The Southland Hotel has been run by the same family for nearly 120 years. It's kept up with the times, but still has West Coast hotel hospitality. There are superior and standard rooms and some have Tasman Sea views. www.southlandhotel.com, Revell Street, ☎ 03-755-8344 or 0800-400-344, fax 03-755-8258 ($$-$$$).

You'll find comfortable and affordable accommodation right on the beach at Shining Star Beachfront Chalets. There are cabins with bath and kitchen, motel units, and tent and power sites. Very nice, very new and good value. www.accommodationwestcoast.co.nz, 11 Richards Drive, ☎ 03-755-8921 or 0800-744-646, fax 03-755-8653 ($$-$$$).

A dependable motel option iss Black Sands Motor Lodge & Motor Home Park, with cabins, cottages, studio and family units; www.blacksands.co.nz, 252 Revell Street, ☎ 03-755-8773 or 0800-755-

222, fax 03-577-8772 ($$-$$$). Another good option is Jade Court Motor Lodge, a new facility; choose from rooms having bath and kitchen, studios and one- and two-bedroom apartments. Nice grounds and pleasant, clean rooms. www.jadecourt.co.nz, 85 Fitzherbert Street, ☎ 03-755-8855 or 0800-755-885, fax 03-755-8133 ($$$).

Blue Spur Lodge is a small, specially built backpackers lodge; there's also a cottage with bath and kitchen and two rooms with ensuite bath, one twin, one double, and an upstairs lounge. A very laid-back place. There are mountain bikes and kayaks for rent and plenty of places to explore. Keith has a wealth of local knowledge about what to do while you're there. 5 km up Hampden Street, on Cement Lead Road, bluespur@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-755-8445 ($).

The Hokitika Holiday Park has units with bath and kitchen, cottages and tourist apartments. 242 Stafford Street, ☎ 755-8172 or 0800-465-436, fax 03-755-8127 ($-$$).

◆ Where to Eat

Café Flix is a good spot for a coffee and muffin and other baked goodies. They stay open late on movie night. 15 Weld Street ($).

For a casual dinner or daytime meal, go to the Filling Station. Good pizza, salads, meats and coffee. 111 Revell Street ($).

Trappers is the place to go if you want to try something new – they make lots of dishes with wild game. 79 Revell Street ($$).

Hokitika to the Glaciers

Heading south from Hokitika, it's about 155 km (96 miles) to Franz Josef, a drive that will take you just under two hours.

◆ Information Sources

Watch the AV display on mining history at Ross Goldfields Visitor Information & Heritage Centre, 4 Aylmer Street, ☎ 03-755-4077, fax 03-755-4078.

◆ Sightseeing

Try to ignore the sandflies and instead focus on the gorgeous rainforest and scenery of the remote coast as you travel south. The first town you'll reach (30 km/18 miles) south is Ross, which gained its fame in the days of gold mining – New Zealand's biggest nugget, a 99 oz piece called Honourable Roddy, was found in 1907 very near to where the information center is today. The visitor center is in a remodeled miner's cottage and holds mining memorabilia. There are a couple of one-hour bush walks around Ross – stop in the visitor center to get a map.

You can rent a pan and try your luck at gold panning in the area behind the information center. Panning $6, pan and shovel rental $5.

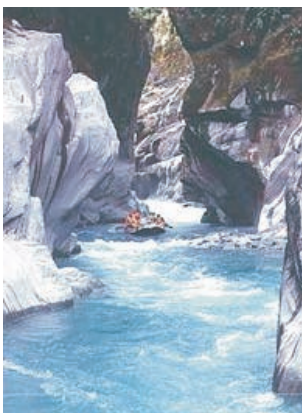
Traveling south from Ross, you'll come across a few options for bush walks and points of interest, including Fergusons Bush. For the bizarre, stop in Pukekura, deep in the rimu trees, population: two. The town's sole industry was based on clear-cutting of rimu trees; when the sawmill closed in the mid-1980s, tourism became the main industry. The Bushman's Centre opened in 1993. You can inquire here about horse treks and canoe trips. The current owners of the center also own the pub, the heli-pad, accommodation and houses, so they effectively own the town. And they have a sense of humor about it.

Lake Ianthe

Lake Ianthe comes next and it's a fine place for a picnic or you can hop aboard the *Tamati* for a scenic 40-minute boat ride around the lake. Departing hourly from the jetty. You might see Southern crested grebe chicks from December to February. $15 adults, either payable on board or at the information center in Hokitika. ☎ 0800-119-494. There is an unepaved road through Ianthe State Forest that leads to a 1½-hour bush walk to a seal colony.

Just north of the small settlement of Whataroa, you will cross the Perth River – one of the most spectacular rivers for white water rafting in New Zealand. West Coast rivers are wild and there's something for everyone.

West Coast Rafting



West Coast rivers are wild and there's something for everyone. Most of the rivers require helicopter access – which only adds to the thrill of the trip. You'll be in canyons and gorges that you had previously only imagined existed.

River classes vary depending on flow – talk to your guide and ask what's going on, and how the river's behaving.

Multi-day: Wanganui class III-IV; Landsborough class IV; Waiatoto class IV.

One day: Whataroa class III-IV; Hokitika, class IV; Perth class V; Whitcombe class V.

Hidden Valleys is based in Peel Forest, but runs trips all over; www.hiddenvalleys.co.nz, ☎ 03-696-3560.

Rivers Wild is based in Franz Josef, but runs trips on seven rivers on the West Coast. www.riverswild.co.nz, ☎ 0800-469-453 or 021-748-371.

Queenstown Rafting runs a multi-day Landsborough trip. www.rafting.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9792 or 0800-723-8464.

The only nesting place in New Zealand of the kotuku or white heron is at the Waitangiroto colony outside of Whataroa. These rare and beautiful birds can only be seen from late October to March. Tours last 2½ to three hours and include transport from the base in Whataroa to the river and then a 20-minute jet-boat ride to the colony.

White Heron Sanctuary

There is a boardwalk through the bush and you can stay to view the birds for 30 to 40 minutes. White Heron Sanctuary Tours are the only operators allowed in the area and there is no access from the Okarito side. $95 adults, $45 children. www.whiteherontours.co.nz, SH6, Whataroa, ☎ 03-753-4120 or 0800-523-456.

Just 15 km (nine miles) south of Whataroa, you'll come to Okarito – where Abel Tasman first spotted New Zealand. It's now a small laid-back settlement where there are a few walks. The best way to see what Okarito has to offer is from the water, and Okarito Nature Tours leads kayak trips and rents kayaks to explore the wetlands. Surrounded by rimu and kahikatea rainforest, this area is home to over 70 species of birds. www.okarito.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-753-4014.

◆ Where to Stay

In Ross, there are a couple of accommodation options, including the Historic Empire Hotel, 19 Aylmer Street, ☎ 03-755-4005 ($-$$); and the Ross Motel on Gibson Street, ☎ 03-755-4153 ($$).

The Pukekura Lodge has cabins, backpacker hostel, luxury tents (permanent with beds) tent and camper sites. All fun and in good condition. SH6, ☎ 03-755-4144 ($).

The Whataroa Hotel has simple, clean and friendly accommodation. whataroahotel@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-753-4076, fax 03-753-4078 ($$).

There are motel units and cabins at the White Heron Sanctuary Tour office. SH6, Whataroa, ☎ 03-753-4120 or 0800-523-456 ($$).

In Okarito, you can get a bunk at the Okarito YHA in the old school house. The Strand, ☎ 03-753-4210 ($).

The Royal Motel & Hostel, also in Okarito, has backpacker and other simple units and fishing gear is available. The Strand, ☎ 03-753-4080 ($).

◆ Where to Eat

In Ross, your choices are pub meals (very tasty) at the Historic Empire Hotel or light meals at the Roddy Nugget Café ($).

In Pukekura go to the Puke Pub and Wildfood Restaurant. They take life less seriously here with menu items like "roadkill of the day," "guess this mess," and "billy goat's legs." You gotta stop in. SH6 ($-$$).

Stone grill, pub food and West Coast specialties are on the menu at the Whataroa Hotel ($-$$).

The Glaciers

High on the "must do" list of any visitor to New Zealand should be a visit to the glaciers of the West Coast. The Fox and the Franz Josef are special, not only because they are the most easily accessible in the world, but because nowhere else in the world do glaciers exist so close to the sea. For example, the Franz Josef is 19 km (12 miles) from the sea and five km (three miles) from the township. Additionally, due to their location on the West Coast these glaciers advance at a rate much faster than most. As weather comes across the Tasman Sea, it carries a lot of moisture. In its passage across the Southern Alps, it cools and most of that moisture is dropped as rain at sea level and snow higher up. The catchment area of a glacier is called its "neve" and the neve of the Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers receive approximately 30 m (nearly 100 feet) of snow each year. The neve on both glaciers is quite large, and the accumulated snow and ice carry a lot of weight, pushing the gla-

Franz Josef Glacier

ciers forward. The glaciers are both quite long – the Franz (fed by three feeder glaciers) is 12 km (seven miles) long and the Fox (fed by four feeder glaciers) is 13 km (eight miles) and quite steep, so the ice has a long way to travel before it melts at the terminus.

A Word About Glaciers

Franz Josef Glacier

Valley glaciers form when snow accumulates and turns to ice, which then begins to flow downward under the pressure of its own weight and the forces of gravity. As the pressure from overlying snow increases, it compacts the lower layers. Ice crystals grow and air spaces decrease until they are very small or nonexistent – this is why dense glacial ice looks blue. When glaciers move quickly, the stress within the ice builds up and results in cracks, or crevasses.

Glaciers are often referred to as "retreating." This doesn't mean that the glacier is high-tailing it back up the hill. It means that the terminus of the glacier (the front) is higher up than it was – that ice is melting at the terminal end faster than it's advancing at the top.

Most glaciers around the world seem to be retreating, but in the last few years it appears the Fox and Franz Josef have been advancing.

The towns of Franz Josef and Fox are 23 km (14 miles) apart and each has accommodation and activity operators. Bus service goes through both and many of the scenic-flight companies have trips to both. Where you choose to stay and which glacier you choose to visit depends largely on personal preference and timing; if you can fit it in, visit them both. Simply put, the differences have to do with access – on the Franz Josef, you walk up the terminal face; it's long, but not terribly steep. The terminal face on the Fox, however, is steep. Access is by way of a walk through the rain forest; when you get to the ice, you are immediately in the crevasses and ice formations.

Be forewarned: *if you are afraid of heights, the bush walk passes some steep drops. It didn't bother me, but a good friend was really frightened and now prefers the Franz. I still highly recommend a full-day guided walk on at least one and, if the weather cooperates and you can afford it, a heli-hike is worth considering.*

Both glaciers have public viewpoints that are roped off for safety, but the ropes are quite a way from the glacier so, if you want to really experience the ice, you need to take a guided trip.

Fox Glacier

With a full-day trip, you will have time to get used to walking on the ice with crampons (supplied by the guiding companies) and also explore much higher up the glacier. Full-day trips are "free guided," meaning that guides look for appropriate routes to take and cut new steps, take you to see crevasses (from a safe distance), lead you through snow caves. There aren't any red velvet ropes up there and it says a lot for the guiding company that there are relatively no injuries. If you are really afraid of heights, I would talk to the company when you book your trip and explain your fears.

The half- and full-day trips are designed for all abilities – no previous mountaineering experience is necessary. Guided walks go out in most all weather, but heli-hikes are canceled in bad weather and low visibility. If the weather plays ball, though, this is a great option as you get much higher up the ice and have a far greater chance of exploring ice caves and crevasses.

Getting on the Ice

The two companies listed below lead trips on Franz Josef; both offer half- and full-day trips, as well as ice climbing and heli-hikes. The half-day trips are about four hours, with one or two hours on the ice; on the seven- to eight-hour full-day trips, you spend five or six hours on the ice (and you get to carry and use an ice ax, which is really cool). Half-day prices start at $65, full-day around $135, heli-hikes at $260 and ice climbing at $200.

The Franz Josef Glacier Guides, www.franzjosefglacier.com, Main Road, next to the Mobil station. ☎ 03-752-0763 or 0800-484-337.

The Guiding Company, www.nzguides.com, is in the Alpine Adventure Centre, ☎ 03-752-0047 or 0800-800-102.

For trips to the Fox, Alpine Guides Fox Glacier offers half- and full-day trips as well as heli-hikes and ice climbing instruction. They also lead trips to Chancellor Dome – day-trips and overnight. www.foxguides.co.nz, ☎ 03-751-0825 or 0800-111-600

There is a range of choices for scenic flights, including The Helicopter Line, www.helicopter.co.nz, operating from both Franz Josef, ☎ 03-752-0767, fax 03-752-0769, and Fox, ☎ 03-751-0767, fax 03-751-0722. The toll-free number for either location is ☎ 0800-807-767.

Air Safaris run fixed-wing scenic flights to and from Lake Tekapo, Mt. Cook, Murchison, Tasman, Franz Josef and Fox glaciers. Prices begin at about $170 and they are a bit longer than the helicopter flights, but don't include an ice landing; www.airsafaris.co.nz, ☎ 0800-723-274. Mt. Cook Airline also does scenic flights and some of their trips include a ski landing on the ice. Prices begin at $190. www.mtcookskiplanes.com, ☎ 0800-702-190.

The village of Franz Josef is a bit bigger and has more services than Fox. There are no banks in either Fox of Franz Josef, but most places accept credit cards and there are a few spots that have ATMs. If you need to change money, though, do it in Hokitika or Wanaka

Did you know? *During the last Ice Age, glaciers covered 32% of the earth's total land area; today, they cover 10% of the land mass and store 75% of the world's fresh water.*

◆ Getting Here

By Car

From Greymouth, Franz Josef is about 179 km (73 miles) and the drive takes 2½ hours; from Hokitika, it's 139 km (86 miles) and takes just under two hours. From Haast, it's also just under two hours and 143 km (89 miles). From Wanaka, figure four hours (294 km/182 miles).

By Bus

Franz Josef is serviced by InterCity and Atomic Shuttles. InterCity buses from the north and south arrive between 4 and 5 pm; departures in both directions are about 8 am. Atomic Shuttles arrives at 2 pm from the south and at 5 pm from the north. Buses headed north depart at 7:30 am and buses headed south depart at 10:30 am. When traveling by bus, if you want to do any trips on the ice, you will need to stay for two nights in either Fox or Franz.

◆ Information Sources

Take a look at www.glaciercountry.co.nz.

◆ Franz Josef

Information Sources

The DoC Franz Josef Visitor Centre is a good place to get your bearings and fill in any missing glacial information you're craving – the displays are great and the staff helpful. The center is open from 8:30 am to 6 pm in the summer (9 am to 5 pm in winter). There is a good movie about the glaciers shown every half-hour and you can also get weather reports here. vctemp@doc.govt.nz, ☎ 03-752-0796, fax 03-752-0797.

The Franz Josef Glacier was named in 1863 by Julius von Haast after the Emporer of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Von Haast, a Canterbury geologist, named the Haast pass after himself).

Adventures

ON FOOT

There are quite a few walks based from Franz, the most popular being the flat Glacier Valley Walk. It takes about 1½ hours and follows the Waiho River bed to the terminal end of the glacier. The short (20 minute) Sentinal Rock Walk has an easy climb and good views of the glacier. At one hour, the Douglas Walk goes past Peters Pool, a kettle lake (left behind by the glacier) and then continues through the bush. For a bit more exercise, take the Roberts Point Track. It's five hours, a bit rocky and goes through gorgeous rain forest (and over some creeks and swing bridges) but is a manageable and fun walk for most people with rewarding views at the end. Finally, in eight hours you can walk the Alex Knob Track, which offers good views of the glacier, the mountains and the coast, taking you through a variety of terrain.

Be sure to see Flowing West, "the film of glacier country." It plays in The Alpine Adventure Centre in Franz Josef. ☎ 03-752-0793.

Where to Stay

For a small village, Franz has quite a bit of accommodation, but beware, they book up quickly in the summer.

Rain Forest Retreat has cool units in the rain forest, either on the forest floor or raised into the canopy. There are also log cottages with bath and kitchen and campervan spaces at the associated Forest Park. www.rainforestretreat.co.nz, ☎ 03-752-0220 or 0800-873-346, fax 03-752-0003 ($-$$$).

Dependable motel options include Glacier Gateway Motor Lodge, glacier.gateway@xtra.co.nz, SH6, ☎ 03-752-0776, fax 03-752-0732 ($$-$$$); Glow-Worm Cottage/Motel, www.budget-accommodation.co.nz, 27 Cron Street, ☎ 03-752-0172 or 0800-151-027, fax 03-752-0173 ($-$$); and Glacier View Motel, www.

keywest.co.nz/glacierview, SH6, ☎ 03-752-0705 or 0800-484-397, fax 03-752-0761 ($$-$$$).

The Franz Josef YHA has been recently remodeled and is a very good choice. Large kitchen, comfortable rooms (dorms, twins and doubles), a shop and some other extras. yha.franzjosef@yha.org.nz, 2 Cron Street, ☎ 03-752-0754, fax 03-752-0080 ($).

The Mountain View Holiday Park has tent and power sites, park motels, standard cabins and tourist apartments. www.mountainview.co.nz, SH6, ☎ 03-752-0735 or 0800-467-897, fax 03-752-0035 ($-$$$).

Where to Eat

My choice for coffee and/or a meal is the Blue Ice Café. They have the best coffee in town and their dinner menu is tasty. SH6 ($-$$).

The Landing Café probably has the best wine list and makes very tempting and tasty vegetarian dinners, as well as fish, venison and other meats. SH6 ($$).

Beeches Café is a good choice for a light meal of a sandwich or salad during the day; in the evening, there is a full à la carte menu. SH6 ($-$$).

◆ Fox

The Fox Glacier was named after former New Zealand Prime Minister William Fox.

Information Sources

The Fox Glacier DoC Visitor Centre is open from 8:30 to 6 pm in the summer, 9 am to 5 pm in the winter, on SH6, ☎ 03-751-0807.

Adventures

ON FOOT

It takes about half an hour on the Fox Glacier Valley Walk to reach the terminal face of the Fox Glacier. The walk leaves from the car park on Glacier Road.

The Chalet Lookout Walk will take you across streams and up to a lookout where you'll have great views of the glacier. Figure 1½ hours round-trip for this one.

There is a short Glow-Worm Forest Walk, which is a good evening adventure. Leave from the Glow-Worm Forest Building, opposite the

BP station. Ask for more information at the visitor center or call ☎ 03-751-0711.

Slightly out of town (six km/four miles) on Cook Flat Road is the magnificent Lake Matheson. There is an hour walk here and the reward for early risers is a fabulous reflective image of Mt. Cook and Mt. Tasman – this is the image you see on postcards and in photo albums. The lake is calmest early in the morning, so set your alarm and get here as the mist rises from the water and the lake is dead still.

There is a seal colony north of Gillespies Beach (21 km/13 miles from Fox), accessible on a three-hour round-trip walk. Stop at DoC and ask when low tide is. You can also see the remnants of an old gold dredge at Gillespies Beach.

Where to Stay

The rooms are very spacious, the bathrooms are huge and the grounds are very pretty at Rainforest Motel. Studios and suites, all with full kitchen. www.rainforestmotel.co.nz, Cook Flat Road, ☎ 03-751-0140 or 0800-724-636 ($$-$$$).

The Fox Glacier Resort Hotel was originally built in 1928. There are a variety of rooms, from the more modern motel units to shared bath hotel rooms in the main building. www.resorts.co.nz, ☎ 03-751-0839 or 0800-273-767, fax 03-751-0868 ($-$$).

Fox Glacier Lodge has budget rooms with shared bath as well as pricier rooms with en-suite bathroom. foxglacierlodge@hotmail.com, Sullivan Road, ☎ 03-751-0888 0800-369-800 ($-$$$).

My choice for hostels is the Fox Glacier Inn and Backpackers, with a wide variety of room types, a comfortable lounge, and spacious kitchen. foxinn@xtra.co.nz, 39 Sullivan Road, ☎ 03-751-0022, fax 03-751-0024 ($).

Where to Eat

The Plateau Café and Bar has the best coffee in town, light meals during the day and a fine dinner menu. Good desserts, as well. Sullivan Road ($-$$).

Another excellent choice is Café Neve. They have good coffee, salads and sandwiches during the day and a full menu at night. SH6 ($-$$).

The Glaciers to Haast

Heading south from the glaciers, you will be in rainforest that's so dense it drips in green. The narrow road is lined with, among others, incredibly tall, straight rimu trees. The road takes a bit of a curve and then you're along the massive beach of Bruce Bay. Halfway between those two points (about 25 km/16 miles south of Fox Glacier) is the Copland Valley and the terminus of the Copland Track, which comes over from Mt. Cook. South of Bruce Bay, you head inland again and come to lakes Paringa and Moeraki. Along the way, there are a few good spots to pull off the road, look at the sea and, if you can stand the sand flies, have a picnic.

Get out your camera: *Between lakes Paringa and Moeraki is "Windbag Creek." Surely there's someone in your car who should be photographed with that sign.*

The Haast region is as diverse and interesting an area as they come. Here you'll find ancient stands of rainforest, sweeping tidal flats, rocky cliffs, and swamp forests; you may see (or hear) kaka, kiwi, morepork, tui, bellbirds, keruru, parakeets and warblers; you may come upon fur seals and, during certain times of the year, you may spot Fiordland crested and blue penguins and Hector's dolphins. Haast is a part of Te Wahipounamu – Southwest New Zealand World Heritage Park.

The Haast is made up of three distinct places. There is Haast Junction, home to the Haast Visitor Centre, where SH6 meets Jackson Bay Road and turns north up the coast; Haast Beach, a small fishing community slightly south of the junction on Jackson Bay Road; and

Haast Township, where you can find accommodation, food and activities.

◆ Getting Here

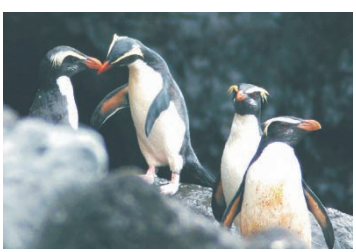
SH6 is the one and only road. From Wanaka to Haast, figure 145 km (90 miles) and 3½ hours; from Franz Josef, it's also 145 km (90 miles), but just about 2½ hours driving time. To Greymouth, it's 335 km (208 miles) and will take you nearly six hours to drive.

◆ Information Sources

This area is served by the South Westland Weheka Area DoC Visitor Centre in Haast Junction. Not only is the staff helpful and knowledgeable, but the displays are interesting and the building and grounds are modern and pleasant. Be sure to watch the 30-minute film, *Edge of Wilderness*. ☎ 03-750-0809, fax 03-750-0832.

◆ Adventures

Watchable Wildlife



During the summer you may spot Hector's dolphins, right, offshore between Jackson Bay and Neils Beach. They also frequent Ship Creek and Knight's Point.

Fiordland crested penguins nest at Wharekai Te Kau. The best time to see the penguins is during breeding season (July to November). They also nest around Monro Beach, a 40-minute walk from Lake Moeraki. The adults are extremely stressed during molt (in February after the young leave home). It's best if you consult the DoC office for information on these rare animals before heading out.

On Water

With Waiatoto River Safaris, you can jet-boat from the sea to the mountains. Trips leave from the Waiatoto Lagoon and travel up the Waiatoto River, snaking through canyons along the way. You turn around in the mountains at The Shark's Tooth. 9 am, noon, 3:15 pm,

$110 per person. www.riversafaris.co.nz, ☎ 03-750-0780, 0800-538-723.

Haast River Safaris offers a more leisurely river trip in a closed-in boat that can go out in any weather. Travel to the Haast Bridge and return, along the way learning about rainforest flora and fauna and the area's history. Trips depart at 8:45 am, 10:45, and 2:45 pm. $110 per person. www.jetboat.com. Leave from The Red Barn, off Jackson Bay Road (you can see it from SH6). ☎ 03-750-0101 or 0800-865-382.

On Foot

The first part of the Copland Track is a great two-day tramp. It's 17 km (10½ miles) to Welcome Flat Hut at the Copland Flats and takes about six hours. The hut is modern and the best part is that it's right near some natural hot springs and pools – a perfect place for a soak! Look for the sign on SH6 marking the track, but pay for your hut use at the DoC office in Fox or Haast.

◆ Sightseeing

The grand majority of travelers never head down Jackson Bay Road. But if you've got a tank of gas and a little time, it's a good diversion. There's not a metropolis in sight – just a few small fishing villages and beaches for picnics, walks and listening to the surf. Along the road, the trees are attention-grabbers, as they evolve from tree ferns and massive flax plants to regenerating wind-swept forests of kanuka and manuka and finally beech, rimu, lance wood and cabbage trees.

◆ Where to Stay

Haast Junction

The biggest place around is the Haast World Heritage Hotel where you can find backpacker and simple motel accommodation. There's a bar and restaurant on-site. www.world-heritage-hotel.com, SH6 at the junction, ☎ 03-750-0828 or 0800-502-444 ($-$$$).

McGuires Lodge is a large, modern accommodation on the grounds of a red-deer farm. There is a bar and restaurant, and the menu emphasizes West Coast foods. There are family, studio and standard units. www.mcguireslodge.co.nz, SH6, just east of the Haast Bridge, ☎ 03-750-0020, fax 03-750-0040 ($$).

The Haast Beach Holiday Park is across from the Hapuka Estuary and has motels, cabins, tent and power sites. pgglubb@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-750-0860 or 0800-843-226 ($-$$).

Haast Village

The pleasant and well-kept Heritage Park Lodge has studio and family units; some have kitchens. www.heritageparklodge.co.nz, Marks Road, ☎ 03-750-0868 or 0800-526-252 ($$-$$$).

The Wilderness Backpackers has twins, doubles and dorms and some rooms with en-suite bathrooms. Marks Road, ☎ 03-750-0029 ($).

◆ Where to Eat

South Westland Salmon Café & Shop just past the Paringa River is a good place to get smoked or fresh salmon. You can feed the salmon, buy the salmon, eat the salmon. ☎ 03-751-0837.

At the junction, the restaurant at McGuires Lodge would be a good choice for a full meal ($-$$), as is the restaurant at the Haast World Heritage Hotel ($$).

The Craypot at Jacksons Bay is a mobile restaurant that makes great fish (including whitebait), chips, venison and other hardy fare. Open until 6 pm daily ($).

The Haast Pass

SH6, the Haast Pass/Tioripatea Highway heads inland at Haast Village and winds its way along the Haast River and over the Haast Pass. At a mere 565 meters (1,830 feet), it is the lowest of the three Southern Alps passes and is an all-weather road through dense rain forest. Initial construction of the road began during the Depression but work was halted during WWII. The road was completed in 1960 and the section linking Haast to the rest of the West Coast was completed in 1965.

Beware: *There is no gas station between Makarora and Haast; or between Haast and Fox Glacier.*

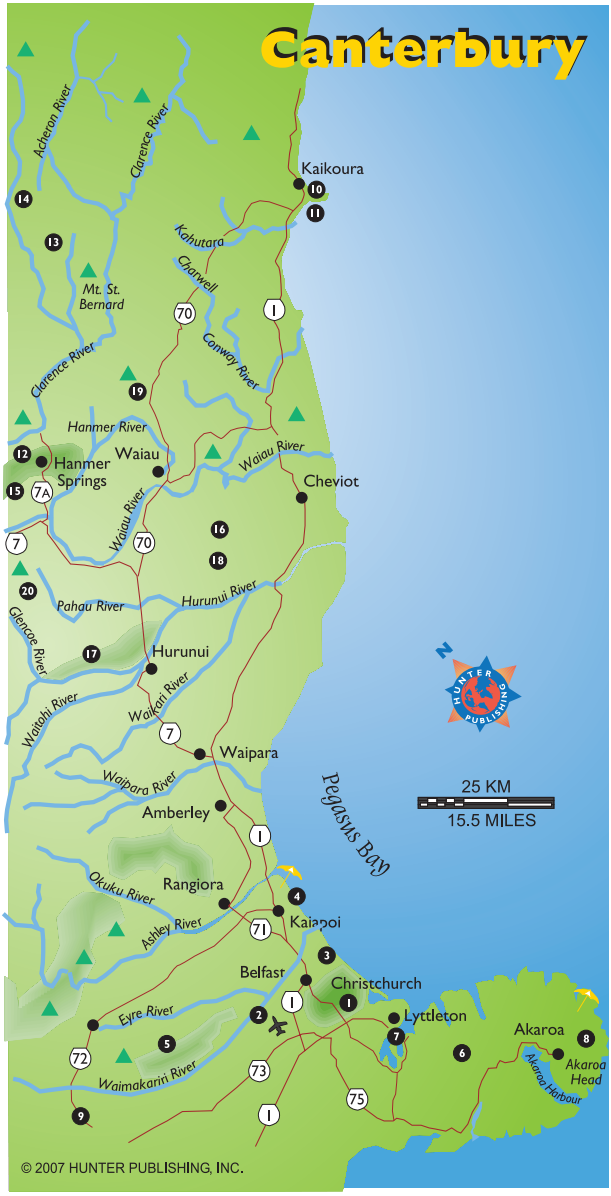
The route has been an important one since the days of the first Maori settlement. Maori of Central Otago and the West Coast crossed the pass to trade pounamu (greenstone) and food. In 1863 Charles Cameron, a gold explorer, was the first pakeha to travel across the pass – it is named, however, for Julius von Haast, who came along several weeks later.

Between the Haast Visitor Center and Haast Pass, there are three waterfalls within an easy walk from the road. Roaring Billy Waterfall is reached by a 25-minute (round-trip) bush walk through tree ferns; Thunder Creek Waterfall is 28 meters (90 feet) high and five minutes off the road. Another five-minute walk takes you to Fantail Falls, shaped, not surprisingly, like a fan.

Tip: *Be sure to stop and get out of your car at The Gates of Haast – the combination of big boulders and whitewater is something you must see!*

SH6 breaks out of the rain forest and into scrub and continues on to Wanaka (145 km/90 miles; 3½ hours from Haast Village). Along the way there are quite a few good walks. Pick up a copy of the Haast Pass brochures at DoC. These walks, as well as accommodation and activities in Makarora are described in the Wanaka section of the Otago chapter.

Road above Gates of Haast


Canterbury
Acheron River
Clarence River
Kaikoura
Kahutara
Chartwell
Mt. St. Bernard
Conway River
Clarence River
Hanmer River
Hanmer Springs
Waiau
Waiau River
Cheviot
Pahau River
Hurunui River
Glencoe River
Hurunui
Waitohi River
Waikari River
Waipara
Waipara River
Amberley
Pegasus Bay
25 KM
15.5 MILES
Okuku River
Rangiora
Ashley River
Kaiapoi
Belfast
Christchurch
Eyre River
Lyttleton
Akaroa
Akaroa Harbour
Akaroa Head
Waimakariri River
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1. Cathedral Square, Christ Church Cathedral, Arts Centre, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna O Waiwhetu, Bone Dude's Bone Carving Studio, Tram Tours, Summit Road Walks, Canterbury Museum, Nga Hau E Wha National Marae, Christchurch Gondola, Riccarton House, QEII Park, Botanic Gardens, Science Alive, Air Force World, Christchurch Casino, Canterbury Brewery
2. Christchurch International Airport, Antarctic Centre
3. Bottle Lake Forest, New Brighton Beach & Pier
4. Pegasus Bay & Walkway, The Pines Beach, Woodend Beach
5. Eyrewell Forest
6. Banks Peninsula: Lyttleton Harbour, Diamond Harbour, Summit Walk, Le Bons Basin, Botanic Gardens
7. Lyttleton Museum, Timeball Museum
8. Langlois-Eteveneaux Cottage & Akaroa Museum, Customs House, Stanley Park, Garden of Tane
9. To Selwyn District: Arthur's Pass National Park, TranzAlpine Train, Korowai-Tussocklands Park, Craigieburn Forest Park, Waimakariri & Rakaia Rivers, Skiing in Craigieburn & Arthur's Pass Scenic Reserve, Mt. Somers Walk
10. Whale Watch Kaikoura, Seal Colony, Clarence Reserve Conservation Area, Fyffe House, Kaikoura Museum, Gold Art & Design, Night Sky, Maori Trips, Kaikoura, Maori Leap Cave, Kaikoura Wine Co.
11. Kaikoura Coast Track
12. Hanmer Springs Thermal Reserve, Hanmer Forest Park, Adventure Centre
13. Molesworth Station Road to Blenheim
14. Rainbow Station & Lake Tennyson
15. Loch Katrine & Lake Sumner Conservation Park
16. Clarence River Raft Trip & Hidden Valleys
17. Balmoral Forest, Hawarden
18. Weka Pass Railway Trip
19. Mt. Lyford Alpine Resort
20. To Lewis Pass, St. James Walkway, Maruia Springs Thermal Park
21. Lake Coleridge Area, Methven, Erewhon Station & Mt. Sunday, Mt. Hutt Forest, Rakaia Gorge Walkway, Ryton Station, Castle Hill Alpine Village, Ashburton Gorge, Alford Forest, Awa Awa Rata Reserve, Pudding Hill

Canterbury

Introduction

Canterbury is one of the most diverse regions in New Zealand. Stretching from Kaikoura in the north to Aoraki/Mt. Cook in the south, it includes oceans, mountains, hot springs, rivers, glaciers and flat, dry plains. Its wildlife ranges from bush birds to the high country kea to three varieties of penguins, dolphins, seals, sea lions and whales. Townships run the gamut as well – from the tiniest settlements of rural New Zealand to Christchurch, a bustling Anglican city with a major University.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Christchurch 306
- Kaikoura 316
- Hurunui 323
- West to the Lewis Pass 328
- Selwyn District 329
- Ashburton 333
- Central South Island 333
- Mackenzie County & Aoraki/Mt. Cook 335

Bounded on the west by the Southern Alps and on the east by the Pacific Ocean, the Canterbury plains sit atop a vast system of aquifers – Christchurch is the only city in the world of its size that doesn't have to treat its drinking water.

Two of the main east-west mountain passes are in Canterbury – the Lewis Pass and Arthur's Pass (the Haast Pass is in the West Coast region); and the highest mountain in Australasia – Aoraki/Mt. Cook – is also here. The TranzAlpine train trip is celebrated as one of the most scenic rides in the world.

Christchurch

Canterbury Plains

The third-largest city in New Zealand, Christchurch is often referred to as our most English city. Christchurch was designed to suit the needs of the Anglican immigrants, who began to arrive in 1850 – they were determined to settle New Zealand in an orderly and logical way.

Cathedral Square, anchored by Christ Church Cathedral, is the center of the city. The construction of the Gothic cathedral began in 1864; it was opened in 1881 and finally completed in 1904. It is open for tours and services and, for a nominal fee, you can climb the 63-meter (204-foot) spire – pick a clear day to do this for the best views of the city. There is also a gift shop and a café on-site.

Christchurch & Banks Peninsula from space (NASA Earth Observatory)

The rest of the square is a concentration of shops and cafés, Internet outposts and a sprinkling of historic sites. If you've been putting off buying Kiwi souvenirs, here's a good spot to pick up all kinds.

The streets of the city are laid out in a grid – but, outside of the main downtown, I always manage to get lost and find myself on the wrong side of a river or park. The four avenues – Moorhouse, Fitzgerald, Bealey and Deans – hem in the city, and are referred to simply as "the Avenues." Within their boundaries is the large Hagley Park – reputedly the largest city park in New Zealand, and home to masses of walking and running tracks and playing fields. Off Cathedral Square, two blocks to the south, is the City Mall, where you'll find department stores, clothing shops, booksellers – the mainstream kind of shopping is done here.

While the Cathedral dominates the city center, the Avon River dominates the outskirts, as it winds its way through the city. Rreserve some time on your visit to Christchurch to wander along the river, through the Arts Centre and the Botanic Gardens. Don't forget that Christchurch is also a coastal city, with beaches and sand dunes minutes from the city center.

Did you know? *Christchurch is the last port of call before the world's cold-loving people head to Antarctica. Teams from New Zealand and abroad fly from Christchurch – it's about five hours to the ice.*

◆ Getting Here

By Air

The Christchurch International Airport is 10 km (six miles) northwest of the city center and services both domestic and international travelers (primarily from Australia). Many hotels and motels provide complimentary shuttle service, and other shuttles also meet most flights. The airport is relatively large and has an information center in both the international and domestic terminals. Travel to the airport on the public bus is $3 per person and takes 30 to 40 minutes with half-hourly departures from Cathedral Square; by shuttle, it's $10 per person and takes 20 to 30 minutes; and by taxi, $25 to $30 and 15 to 20 minutes.

Tip: *If you have a layover at the Christchurch airport, use it to visit the International Antarctic Centre, only an eight-minute walk from the airport. See Sightseeing section, page 312.*

By Car

SH1 links Christchurch with points farther north and south. From Blenheim, it's about 320 km (198 miles) and takes roughly 4½ hours to drive; from Dunedin, it's 360 km (223 miles) and takes five hours. Coming from the West Coast, figure 190 km (118 miles) and just over three hours from Greymouth on SH73.

By Bus

Christchurch is serviced by all the main shuttle and bus lines. Most of them pick up and drop off from Cathedral Square.

InterCity, www.intercitycoach.co.nz, ☎ 03-379-9020.
Atomic Shuttles, www.atomictravel.co.nz, ☎ 03-322-8883.
Hanmer Connection, hanmerconnection@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 0800-377-378.
South Island Connection, ☎ 03-366-6633.

By Train

Christchurch is the beginning point of the daily round-trip train service to Picton on the TranzCoastal and to Greymouth on the TranzAlpine. Train reservations can be made at the information center or through TranzScenic directly. www.tranzscenic.co.nz, ☎ 0800-872-467.

TranzAlpine Express

◆ Getting Around

The Shuttle provides free central-city transport from 8 am to 10:30 pm weekdays, to midnight on weekends. Look for the yellow signs. It goes out by Hoyts 8 movie complex and Science Alive museum in the south end of town all the way to the Convention Centre in the north end.

◆ Information Sources

The very capable and efficient Christchurch & Canterbury Marketing organization supports www.christchurchnz.net. Another site to check out for events is www.bethere.org.nz.

The always busy and amazingly organized visitor information center is open daily from 8:30 am, and is located on Cathedral Square, ☎ 03-379-9629.

The DoC North Canterbury Area Office is open Monday to Friday (8:30 am to 5 pm) and is located at 133 Victoria Street, ☎ 03 371 3706.

Did you know? *The World Buskers Festival is held annually in January. www.worldbuskersfestival.co.nz.*

◆ Adventures

Watchable Wildlife

The Travis Nature Heritage Park is a lowland freshwater wetland and home to 55 different species of birds. There is a walking track that goes around most of the reserve, an educational center and a viewing platform. Off Beach and Frosts Road.

Orana Park Wildlife Trust has native birds and imported animals, with quite a few from Africa. Open daily, 10 am to 5 pm. www.oranawildlifepark.co.nz, McLeans Island Road, ☎ 03-359-7109.

Willowbank Wildlife Reserve has farm animals, native birds and fish, as well as exotic animals like wallabies, otters, llamas and emus. www.willowbank.co.nz, 60 Hussey Road, ☎ 03-359-6226.

On Water

These safe swimming beaches run along Pegasus Bay, to the north of the city.

- *Spencer Park*
- *Broad Park*
- *New Brighton Pier*
- *Sumner & Scarborough Beach*
- *Taylors Mistake*

With Punting on the Avon, you can opt to just punt or punt 'n indulge – go punting down the river and then have a gourmet platter or Devonshire tea, either on the banks of the river or in the CLUB res-

taurant. Daily from 9 am in summer, 10 am in winter, from $12 per person. www.christchurchnz.net/punting, ☎ 03-379-9629.

Punting in the Park has 30-minute trips leaving from 9:30 am to dusk. Your punter will be in traditional dress. $15 adults. punting@xtra.co.nz, tours depart from Antigua Boat Shed, ☎ 03-366-0337.

Learn to surf at the South Island Surfing Company. Weekend sessions are available and lesson packages are by arrangement. If you already know how to surf, you can rent gear here, too. Prices start at $35 for 90 minutes. www.surfsouth.co.nz, on the mall in New Brighton, ☎ 03-382-6969.

Rangitata Rafts runs fabulous one-day rafting adventures on Grade I-V rapids through the Rangitata Gorge. These guys (and gals) are really fun and run totally professional trips. They operate in the Peel Forest, with transport available from Christchurch. This is probably the best easily-accessible one-day rafting trip in New Zealand. Lunch before and BBQ after the trip are included, as is all gear. $145. www.rafts.co.nz, ☎ 0800-251 251.

In the Air

Hot air ballooning is a Canterbury icon and Up Up and Away balloons fly from the center of the city in view of the ocean toward the mountains – it's the only place in the world where you can do that! Call them for start times (it'll be rather early in the summer!). www.ballooning.co.nz, ☎ 03-381-4600, fax 03-381-4611.

Christchurch Helicopters offers scenic flights, heli-skiing and charter. www.christchurchhelicopters.co.nz, Christchurch airport, ☎ 03-359-0470.

On Horses

Parkgrove Riding Stables takes riders on farm and beach treks for an hour or longer. Prices start at $35. Rides can be combined with a jet-boat ride. www.

adventurecanterbury.com, 78 Lower Styx Road, Marshlands, ☎ 03-385-2508.

On Bikes

The Mountain Bike Adventure Company has a "gondola-up, mountain-bike-down" package. Minimum age 15, or with adult, 12. Allow two hours, includes safety gear, bike, and gondola ride. $45 for gondola/mountain bike package. www.cyclehire-tours.co.nz, ☎ 0800-424-534.

Action Dirt Karts *is an indoor dirt track and could bring out parts of your personality that you didn't know existed. Prices begin at $10 per person for five minutes. www.dirtkarts.co.nz, 23 Leeds Street, ☎ 03-377-3730.*

◆ Sightseeing

The Arts Centre is on the site of the old university campus and is a fabulous place to poke around in over 40 galleries, studios, shops and cafés. If you're in town on the weekend, don't miss the market – filled with arts, crafts, music and food. www.artscentre.org.nz, between Hereford and Worcester, Rolleston and Montreal. ☎ 03-366-0989, fax 03-379-7576.

The beautiful Christchurch Art Gallery-Te Puna O Waiwhetu opened in 2003 and is the largest art institution on the South Island. Open daily, 10 am to 5 pm, 10 am to 9 pm on Wednesday. www.christchurchartgallery.org.nz, corner of Worcestor Boulevard and Montreal Street.

Tram tours circle around the inner city, pointing out interesting things along the way. Summer, 9 am to 9 pm, winter, 9 am to 6pm. $10 adults, buy your tickets on board. Cathedral Square, along Worcestor Boulevard, to Rolleston, up Armagh, to New Regent and back.

The International Antarctic Centre tours take you through the four seasons on Antarctica, as well as a display on Scott Base, the New Zealand base. It's very cold in The Snow and Ice Experience (-5°C/23°F and -18°C/0°F wind chill) and you can go down an ice slide. There's an interactive gallery with lots of stuff for kids and adults and

Autumn colors, Mackenzie region, Christchurch

plenty of "Please Touch" signs. The Great White South is a very good audio-visual movie. For an additional fee you can take a Hagglund ride, the kind of vehicle used on the ice. Open daily from 9 am to 8 pm summer, 5:30 pm winter; open on Christmas! Allow two or three hours for your visit. $20 adult, $10 child; $10 more for the Hagglund ride. www.iceberg.co.nz; it's an eight-minute walk from the airport, 38 Orchard Road, ☎ 03-353-7798 or 0508-736-4846.

A visit to the Canterbury Museum will help you understand the history of the region and the current issues it faces. You can take a walk down a re-creation of Victoria Street. Open 9 am to 5:30 pm in the summer, 9 am to 5 pm in the winter, Free admission and there is a museum store and café. Rolleston Avenue, in the Botanic Gardens, ☎ 03-366-6000 fax 03-366-5622.

Daily tours are available at Nga Hau E Wha National Marae, where you can learn about Maori culture, customs and history. There are also night-time hangi (traditional Maori feasts), guided tours and concerts. You can visit the marae, or Maori meeting place, free of charge between 9 am and 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday; show prices are $25 adults ($15 children) for the concert only, $30 adults ($19 children) for tour and concert, and $65 adults ($36 children) for tour, concert and hangi. www.nationalmarae.co.nz, 250 Pages Road, ☎ 03-388-7692.

For great vies of Christchurch, the Canterbury plains and Lyttelton Harbour, ride the Christchurch Gondola to almost 1,500 feet above sea level at the top of the Port Hills. $15 adults, $7 children, Based in the Heathcote Valley, 15 minutes from downtown. www.gondola.co.nz.

Science Alive! Is an interactive science center. Open 10 am to 5 pm, www.sciencealive.co.nz, in the old train station, 392 Moorhouse Ave, ☎ 03-365-5199.

Canterbury Brewery does tours and tops them off with a tastings. There is also a museum of beer. Tours are 1½ hours and begin at 10 am and 12:30 pm, Monday to Thursday; 1 pm on Saturday. Bookings are essential. 36 St. Asaph Street, ☎ 03-379-4940.

◆ Where to Stay

Christchurch

The George is a small luxury hotel with all the extras. It's a top choice. www.thegeorge.com, 50 Park Terrace, ☎ 03-379-4560 or 0800-100-220 ($$$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Per room, double occupancy	
$	under NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$101-$175
$$$$	over NZ$175

The Copthorne Central overlooks Victoria Park and reopened in 2002 after a massive upgrade. It has twins, queens, suites and family rooms. www.copthornecentral.co.nz, 776 Colombo Street, ☎ 03-379-5880. The Copthorne Durham is across the street from the Casino and has the full range of rooms. www.copthornedurham.co.nz, corner of Durham and Kilmore streets, ☎ 03-366-4699 or 0800-267-846 ($$$-$$$$).

The Chateau on the Park is a large complex with 183 rooms (some suites have spas, others have baths), native garden views, rose gardens, heated pool, outdoor dining in rose garden, two restaurants. Free shuttle to the airport and train, but check times because it may not get you there early enough for your train! www.chateau-park.co.nz, ☎ 03-348-8999 or 0800-808-999, fax 03-348-8990 ($$-$$$$).

The Windsor Hotel is a comfortable old hotel with shared baths. It's very clean, friendly and budget-minded and has a few extras like bathrobes, hotwater bottles, laundry facilities and off-street parking. A full breakfast is included and it's just a few blocks from the city cen-

ter. www.windsorhotel.co.nz, 52 Armagh Street, ☎ 03-366-1503 or 0800-366-1503, fax 03-366-9796 ($$-$$$).

Bealey Ave and Papanui Road are the motel strips. A few dependable ones to try include Bella Vista Motel, www.bellavistamotel.co.nz, 193 Bealey Ave, ☎ 03-377-3363 or 0800-235-528, fax 03-377-3445 ($$-$$$); Tuscana Motor Lodge, www.tuscana.co.nz, 74 Bealey Ave, ☎/fax 03-377-4485 or 0508-887-226 ($$-$$$$); and Akron Motel, www.nzmotels.co.nz/akron.motel, 87 Bealey Ave., ☎ 03-366-1633 or 0800-778-787, fax 03-379-1332 ($$-$$$).

Thomas's Hotel is convenient to downtown, opposite the Art Centre. There's a big kitchen, lots of room options, bike rental and storage of gear, skis, bikes. Some rooms with en-suite bathrooms, some with shared bath; single, twin and double as well as multi-share. Very tidy and fine for what it is. www.thomashotel.co.nz, 36 Hereford Street, ☎ 03-379-9536, fax 03-379-9556 ($-$$).

New Excelsior Backpackers has a cool rooftop sundeck with BBQ and tables, chairs, perfect for drinking beer and soaking up sun. All the doubles have sinks, and there are many twin rooms. This is an old hotel that's been a backpacker hostel for six years and still has old-hotel charm. www.newexcelsior.co.nz, corner, Manchester and High Streets, ☎ 03-366-7570, fax 03-366-7629 ($).

At Christchurch City Central YHA, you'll be just a couple of minute's walk from the cathedral and all the goings on. There are two kitchens, lots of space to spread out and an on-site booking service. yha.christchurchcity@yha.org.nz, 273 Manchester Street, ☎ 03-379-9535, fax 03-379-9537 ($).

◆ Where to Eat

You are not going to go hungry while you're here. There are the requisite kebab and noodle shops and all sorts of trendier options.

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée	
$	under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$21-$30
$$$$	over NZ$30

To see and be seen, head on down to Oxford Terrace, where your choices include (but are not limited to) the Tex-Mex of Coyote Street (126 Oxford Terr.); the Mediterranean of Azure (128 Oxford Terr.); the trendy and modern at Sticky Fingers (corner of Hereford); and Japanese at Sala Sala (184 Oxford Terr.).

For a great brunch (or dinner) go to Boulevard at the corner of Hereford and Oxford Terrace ($$-$$$).

My current favorite restaurant in Christchurch is Alchemy at the Christchurch Art Gallery. Good, healthy portions of very tasty food. Some menu items are innovative, some are more traditional, but all are nicely presented. There's also a comfortable bar ($$).

Dux De Lux Restaurant and Bar serves vegetarian, seafood and all sorts of blackboard menu items, and they're not too bad on the desserts, either. This is also home to Dux's in-house brewery. It's a popular place to sit outside and drink a pitcher while you listen to music ($$-$$$).

As far as cafés go, there are more than a few, but the Backstage Bakery at the Arts Centre, Collins Building, has great food and coffee ($). So does the Boulevard Bakehouse Café, which is also at the Arts Centre, Boulevard Shops & Galleries (open until midnight) ($).

Kaikoura

Kaikora (Dennis Buurman)

Kaikoura translates into "meal of crayfish" and comes from the combination of the Maori word for food, "kai," and crayfish, "koura. " The town had humble beginnings as a fishing village, but has grown into an international travel destination for those who want to interact with marine life.

Did you know? *Crayfish is rock lobster. You can find it on many menus, but it's rather expensive. If you drive up the coast about 15 minutes, you'll find campers selling it on the roadside at a much more reasonable price.*

Several species of whales live in the Kaikoura area, including that incredible giant, the sperm whale.

Killer whale

Try to imagine the ocean floor. Just off the coast of Kaikoura, an unusual phenomenon occurs – instead of the sea floor gradually sloping from the beach, it drops off precipitously, forming a continental shelf at the edge of a very deep underwater canyon. This provides a rich and diverse feeding ground for whales, dolphins, and seals. Because of the flow of water from Antarctica, the feeding grounds are constantly being replenished and marine mammals can live here year-round and never go hungry. In addition to sperm whales, pilot whales and orca are occasionally seen; dusky dolphins are almost always around; and Hector's dolphins are seen often. There are a few colonies of fur seals as well.

Kaikoura is a success story. When the whaling industry came to an end, fishing was all that was left. Kaikoura was not only a sleepy little village, but a poor one. The locals looked around and asked themselves, what have we got here? We've got those whales. Wonder if anyone would want to go out and see them? And a couple of brave and trusting families mortgaged their homes, bought a boat, and in 1987 created Whale Watch Kaikoura Ltd. Whale-watching tours began in 1989 when 3,000 people went out to see the whales. In 2003, over 70,000 did the same.

It didn't take long before the locals realized people might also like to see dolphins and seals, and that maybe someone who doesn't want to go in a boat might just want to go in an airplane or a helicopter.

Tip: *All trips on the water are weather-dependent and Kaikoura is an exposed coast. You must book in advance for wildlife trips and if your trip gets cancelled due to weather, you will be offered another date. Try to be in Kaikoura for two to three nights – there are plenty of activities to keep you busy and you'll have a better chance at getting out to see the wildlife.*

◆ Getting Here

By Air

The nearest commercial airports are in Blenheim and Christchurch. Scenic flights come and go from the Kaikoura airport, just south of town.

By Car

Kaikoura is located on SH1, about 130 km (80 miles) south of Blenheim. Without stopping, you can make it in an hour and a half. The coast is incredible and there are often seals at play or at rest at Ohau Point Seal Colony. Christchurch is about 180 km (110 miles) south of Kaikoura and takes a little more than two hours.

By Train

The TranzCoastal train operates daily between Christchurch and Kaikoura, calling in on both northbound and southbound service. The train station is aptly named the Whaleway Station. www.tranzscenic.co.nz, ☎ 0800-872-467.

By Bus

South Island buses call into Kaikoura and most things in Kaikoura are within walking distance. You can get shuttle service to the Kaikoura Peninsula walkways, the seal colony, Mount Fyffe, Fyffe Palmer Track or sign up for a one-hour sightseeing tour with Snowman Shuttles, snowmanshuttles@hotmail.com, ☎ 0800-766-962.

◆ Information Sources

Check out www.kaikoura.co.nz for information about the area.

The very helpful and up-to-date Kaikoura Visitor Information and Tourism Inc, info@kaikoura.co.nz, is located on West End, ☎ 03-319-5641, fax 03-319-6819.

The DoC office is on Ludstone Road, ☎ 03-319-5714.

◆ Adventures

Watchable Wildlife

The Seal Colony is just a short drive, about six km (nearly four miles), from the center of town. You'll often find seals lounging around, resting or swimming and rolling around in the sea. Remember: Never get between a baby and its mother and stay a respectful distance away from all of them.

Whale Watch Kaikoura Ltd. takes 70,000 people a year to see the whales and learn more about the environment. The trips include a computer-animated movie of the ocean emptying to reveal the deep canyon, then filling back up and showing what creatures and fish are at the different levels. The animations are shown to coincide with what's going on at the time – when you see a whale dive, for instance, the crew will show the movies about how whales dive. You must book in advance (especially during the busy summer months). Cost is $110 adult, $60 child (ages three to 15). www.whalewatch.co.nz, The Whaleway Station, ☎ 03-319-6767 or 0800-655-121, fax 03-319-6545.

You'll probably swim with dusky dolphins if you go out with Dolphin Encounter. These are the playful acrobats of the dolphin world and it's a take-your-breath-away kind of experience. You must absolutely book in advance – swim trips are often booked weeks ahead! $115 for adults to swim, $55 to watch; $105 for children under 15 to swim, $45 to watch. www.dolphin.co.nz, ☎ 03-319-6777 or 0800-733-365, fax 03-319-6534.

Equally fun to swim with are seals and Dive Kaikoura is a boat-based seal swim that takes three tours a day in summer, one to two per day at other times of year. $65 for adults to swim, $40 for children. Spectators $40. 58 West End, timdivekaikoura@xtra.co.nz es, ☎ 03-319-6622 or 0800-728-223 fax 03-319-6868

Seal Swim Kaikoura takes land-based seal swimming trips. $50 adults, $40 children. sealswim@clear.net.nz, 190 Beach Road, ☎ 03-319-6182 or 027-488-6235, fax 03-319-6186. You can also book with Topspot Seal Swim, $50 adults, under 12 $30, ☎ 03-319-5540, fax 03-319-6587.

Sea Kayak Kaikoura leads half-day guided tours taking in the coastline and seal colony. Departs from info center, 8:30 am, 12:30, 4:30 pm (summer) $70 adults, $50 children, seakayakkaikoura@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-319-5641 or 0800-728-223 or 027-201-3298.

Wings over Whales has fixed-wing 30-minute flights that leave at 9 am, 11 am, 1 and 3 pm. Other times are available by arrangement. From $135 for adults. ☎ 03-319-6580 or 0800-226-629.

Flights on Kaikoura Helicopters last 30 to 40 minutes and start at $165 for adults. At the railway station, right next to Kaikoura Whale Watch Ltd, ☎ 03-319-6609 or 027-437-2300, fax 03-319-6814.

Fishing Options

For a fishing trip with a difference, contact Kaikoura Executive Sea Tours. Passengers catch fish and pick up lobster from pots, then have them prepared on the boat. There is tons of food to eat and it's a good scenic sunset trip. Brunch trips are also available. $95 adults, $55 children. www.kaikouraexecseatours.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-319-7424 or 0800-732-868.

Reel "Obsession" Charters takes two-hour trips for two to eight passengers, or longer by arrangement. $60 adults, $30 children. www.kiwitravelchannel.co.nz, reelobsessioncharters@paradise.net.nz, ☎ 03-319-5350 or 025-284-5941.

Kaikoura Fishing Adventures takes two-hour and full-day trips. Prices begin at $60. seatours03@yahoo.co.nz, ☎ 03-319-6981 or 025-470-007.

Kaikoura is a favorite surf spot and you can learn to surf with Board Silly Adventures. $65 adults, under 13 $55; includes transport to beach, coaching, equipment and wetsuit. ☎ 03-319-6464 or 025-645-8211.

On Foot

There is a good walk on the Kaikoura Peninsula that leaves from the seal colony, and takes about five hours if done as a loop (11km/seven miles). The Promenade Shoreline walk goes along the peninsula, past a couple of seal colonies, a gull colony and sea caves; the Promenade Clifftop

walk goes, obviously, along the top. The shoreline walk is tide-dependent – call the information center before heading out.

There are quite a few walks in the Clarence Reserve Conservation Area. It's a rugged area on the Seaward Kaikouras and you would be wise to go to the DoC office in Kaikoura to get information. Ludstone Road, ☎ 03-319-5714, or the Kaikoura Visitor Centre, ☎ 03-319-5641.

The Kaikoura Coast Track is a three-day, three-night walk across private land that begins about 45 minutes south of Kaikoura. The walk travels through bush, along coastal ridges, on the beach, back into the bush and across more hills. Set on three private farms, the accommodation varies, but all have hot showers, full kitchens, BBQ and a mixture of bunk, double and twin rooms. Packs are transported from one hut to the next, so all you need to carry is a day pack. In the evenings, you can relax on your own (or with your group) or socialize with the host and family. Meals can be provided and the walk, while taking an average of four or five hours each day, is not a terribly strenuous or technical one. The views are fabulous and the price is just $130 per person for accommodation and pack transfer. www.kaikouratrack.co.nz, ☎ 03-319-2715, fax 03-319-2724.

On Horses

Fyffe View Horse Treks offer two-hour treks through farmland, the mountains, and across riverbeds. No riders under 12. Prices begin at $45, with transport extra. Mt. Fyffe Road, ☎ 03-319-5069, fax 03-319-7202.

◆ Sightseeing

The historic Fyffe House is the oldest building in Kaikoura. Robert Fyffe founded Waiopuka whaling station in 1842 and this house was part of the station. 62 Avoca Street, ☎ 03-319-5835.

Maori Tours Kaikoura is interactive Maori tour. Learn a song, learn about the bush and the uses of plants, do a little flax weaving. It's a

great trip and limited to nine people, insuring a personalized experience. Trips last a half-day, and leave at 10:30 am and 3 pm in summer. maoritoursk@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-319-5567 or 0800-866-267.

Kaikoura Wine Company is just a few minutes south on SH1. Tours are $7.50 (which includes tastings) and tastings alone are $3, refundable with purchase. Open daily, 10 am to 5:30 pm. SH1.

◆ Where to Stay

During the busy summer season, Kaikoura fills up fast! Be sure to reserve in advance.

Kaikoura Lodge is gorgeous, modern and sophisticated yet relaxed. There's a fabulous dining room for breakfast and a very comfortable lounge. It's set on a deer farm and there are rooms in the lodge, an apartment and individual units in the woods that grows between the lodge and the sea. On the grounds is Hapuku Café (see below for details). www.kaikouralodge.com, 12 km (seven miles) north of Kaikoura, ☎ 03-319-6559, fax 03-319-6557 ($$$$).

Lemon Tree Lodge is another good option. The four units have outside decks and two have spectacular ocean views. There's a great outdoor hot tub that's under the trees and even on a rainy night it's a terrific place to watch the ocean. www.lemontree.co.nz, 31 Adelphi Terrace, ☎ 03-319-7464 or 0800-108-951, fax 03-319-7467 ($$$).

The Old Convent has a new owner who is putting great energy into an already fun and interesting place. There's a new café and wine bar set to open. Mt. Fyffe Road, ☎ 03-319-6603, fax 03-319-6690 ($$-$$$$)

Kaikoura has a full menu of motels. A dependable one is Blue Seas Motel, right on the seafront, with studios and one- and two-bedroom units. www.virtual-kaikoura.com/blueseas, 222 The Esplanade, ☎ 03-319-5441 fax 03-319-6707 ($$-$$$). Another is Admiral Court, with studio and family units in a fairly simple motel. www.kaikouramotel.co.nz, 16 Avoca Street, ☎ 03-319-5525 or 0800-555-525 ($$-$$$).

The Anchor Inn Motel is probably the best motel in town. It's on the water, clean, new and breakfast is available. www.anchor-inn.co.nz, 208 The Esplanade, ☎ 03-319-5426 or 0800-720-033, fax 03-319-5427 ($$$-$$$$).

Bad Jelly Backpackers has no dorms, just twins and doubles. badjelly53@hotmail.com, 11 Churchill Street, ☎ 03-319-5538, fax 03-319-5539 ($).

Lyall Creek Lodge is a more upmarket backpacker lodge. Many rooms have en-suite baths and linen is provided. lyallcreeklodge@yahoo.co.uk, 193 Beach Road, ☎ 03-319-6277 or 021-293-2503 ($-$$).

The A1 Kaikoura Motel and Holiday Park has tourist apartments, cabins with en-suite bathrooms, tent and power sites, 11 Beach Road, ☎/fax 03-319-5999 or 0800-605-999 ($-$$).

Kaikoura Top 10 Holiday Park is very popular and always full – book in advance! Everything from tent sites right up to motel rooms with bath and kitchen. www.kaikouratop10.co.nz, 34 Beach Road, ☎/fax 03-319-5362 or 0800-363-638 ($-$$).

◆ Where to Eat

The Hapuku Café at Kaikoura Lodge serves vegetarian, seafood and venison main dishes. The very health-conscious menu was inspired by the owner's interest in health and educating the Kiwi public about good eating. Corner of Hapuku Road and SH1, 20 km (12 miles) north of Kaikoura. ☎ 03-319-6558 ($$-$$$).

The Craypot Café and Bar is right smack in the middle of town, with good food, friendly service and good coffee. 70 West End Road ($$-$$$).

Aromas has great coffee and very tasty seafood chowder. Also good salads, a stone grill and desserts. West End ($-$$).

Hislops Wholefoods Café is one of the originals. Great salads and vegetarian options and delicious baked things! 33 Beach Road ($).

Hurunui

Heading south from Kaikoura, you have two options – to continue on SH1 through agricultural towns, including Cheviot and Waipara, or to head inland on SH70 through Mt. Lyford to SH7, where a short side track takes you to Hanmer Springs, an alpine spa town that also has adrenaline action. SH7 continues on to the Lewis Pass, Maruia Springs and Springs Junction. For travelers heading to

Christchurch, SH1 is the quickest and most direct, but the inland road, which has only been completely paved for the last few years, is a pleasant and easy alternative. SH7 rejoins SH1 at Waipara – one of the newer wine growing regions in New Zealand.

Tip: *As you travel south from Kaikoura, keep an eye on the sea (and at least one on the curving road) for dolphins. Sometimes, pods of frisky dusky dolphins will put on a show just off the coast.*

◆ Getting Here

By Car

From Christchurch, allow 90 minutes to Hanmer Springs; from Kaikoura, about 15 minutes more. It's four hours to either Nelson or Picton and three hours to Greymouth.

By Bus

The Hanmer Connection has scheduled round-trip service between Kaikoura and Hanmer Springs, Christchurch and Hanmer Springs, and Greymouth and Hanmer Springs. ☎ 0800-377-378.

◆ Information Sources

The Hurunui Visitor Information Centre is in Hanmer Springs. Not only does the office provide good information, but there is a fabulous map room upstairs and an extensive gift shop. www.hurunui.com, 42 Amuri Street, ☎ 03-315-7128 or 0800-442-663.

◆ Adventures

In Thermal Water

Hanmer Springs wouldn't be what it is without Hanmer Springs Thermal Reserve, a complex of swimming and soaking pools of varying temperatures filled with the hot mineral water that has been a

draw to the area since the 1870s. In addition to the therapeutic pools, there is also a lap pool, a toddler pool and a health spa that has the whole menu of massages and facials. Open daily, 10 am to 9 pm. $8 adults, $15 for a private pool, $5 extra for waterslide. www.hotfun.co.nz, ☎ 0800-873-529.

On Water

For a fabulous multi-day raft trip down the Clarence River that's suitable for families, contact Hidden Valleys. They offer a 240-km (150-mile) gentle trip through river gorges and high country that takes five days. Paddle from the Spencer Mountains and past the Inland and Seaward Kaikoura ranges. www.hiddenvalleys.co.nz, ☎ 03-696-3560.

Jet-boating or whitewater rafting (grades II-III) is available with Thrillseekers Canyon. Choices include two options through the Waiau Gorge. They also have a jet-boat/raft combo – raft down the river and jet-boat back up. These folks are also the operators of the local bungy jump, off the 135-year-old, 35-meter (113-foot) Waiau Ferry Bridge. www.thrillseekerscanyon.co.nz, at the ferry bridge, Hanmer Springs, ☎ 03-315-7046.

On Foot

There are quite a few local walks that go through the Hanmer Forest Park and range from one to several hours. On a hot day, a particularly refreshing walk is the three-hour Waterfall Track – the waterfall comes just at the right time for a picnic. Pick up a copy of *Hanmer Forest Recreation* at the information center.

On Bikes

There are mountain-bike tracks at Mt. Lyford as well as within the Hanmer Forest Park – check in with the information center to get local updates. Contact Hanmer Springs Adventure Centre for mountain-bike, motor scooter and ski gear rental. They also offer guided mountain-bike rides. 20 Conical Hill Road, ☎ 03-315-7233.

On Horses

Hanmer Horses caters to all ages and abilities and leads horse treks from one hour to 2½ hours. They're right in town and very friendly. Prices begin at $40 adults, $35 children. They also have 20-minute pony rides. www.hanmerhorses.co.nz, ☎ 03-315-7444.

Hurunui Horse Treks also leads quality half- , full- and multi-day rides from two to eight days through the high country, including a popular Mountains-to-Sea option. Prices begin at $95 for half-day, $415 for overnight. www.hurunui.co.nz, ☎ 03-314-4204.

In the Air

Fixed-wing scenic flights can be booked through Hanmer Air, ☎ 0800-235-942; helicopter flights can be booked through Hanmer Helicopters, ☎ 03-315-7758.

With Wine

The Waipara Valley is one of the up-and-coming wine regions in New Zealand. There are quite a few vineyards in the ground, but only a few wineries are open during regular hours for tastings and tours. The ones that are open, though, are definitely worth a stop and make delicious Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, some Gewurztraminer and Pinot Noir.

You can't miss the gigantic Canterbury House. The restaurant and cellar door (tasting room) are open daily (until 11 pm on Friday and Saturday). 780 Glasevin Road, SH1, ☎ 03-314-6900, Amberley ($$-$$$).

The very low-key and friendly Pegasus Bay has a restaurant (open noon to 4 pm daily) and cellar door (open 10:30 am to 5 pm daily), Stockgrove Road. ☎ 03-314-6869.

Waipara Springs was one of the first wineries here and is open daily from 11 am to 5 pm during spring, summer and autumn. 409 Omihi Road, SH1, Waipara.

Vin de Pays has wine, food and garden tours from $85. www.vindepays.co.nz, ☎ 03-357-8262.

◆ Where to Stay

The old Hanmer Lodge Hotel is now part of the Heritage Hotel chain and has recently undergone a major remodeling and transformation. Room choices include villas and garden suites. 1 Conical Hill Road, ☎ 03-315-7021 or 0800-368-888, fax 03-315-7023 ($$$-$$$$).

The best B&B in town is Cheltenham House. There are four suites in the 1930s house and two in the garden. There is a large guest lounge and it's just a short walk to the thermal pools. www.cheltenham.com, 13 Cheltenham Street, ☎ 03-315-7545, fax 03-315-7645 ($$$-$$$$).

There are a slew of motels. I've been comfortable at the Drifters Inn, which includes continental breakfast in the room rate. www.driftersinn.co.nz, 2 Harrogate Street, ☎ 03-315-7554, fax 03-315-7235 ($$$-$$$$).

The Alpine Lodge Motel is right across the street from the thermal pools and has a range of room types. www.alpinelodgemotel.co.nz, 1 Harrogate Street, ☎ 03-315-7311, fax 03-315-7312 ($$-$$$$).

Le Gite Backpackers is a short walk from the town center and is set up quite well. All beds are made up, the kitchen is spacious and there is a sunny garden and courtyard. Doubles, three- and four-bed rooms. www.legite.co.nz, 3 Devon Street, ☎/fax 03-315-5111 ($).

Hanmer Springs Forest Camp has tent sites, a lodge and cabins set in the forest. It's about 2½ km (1½ mile) out of town. hanmer.forest.camp@xtra.co.nz, 243 Jollies Pass Road, ☎/fax 03-315-7202 ($).

The Mountain View Top 10 Holiday Park has the full range of options and is close to town. They have a playground area for the kids. mtview.hanmer@clear.net.nz, Hanmer Springs Road, ☎ 03-315-7113 or 0800-904-545, fax 03-315-7118 ($-$$).

◆ Where to Eat

The top spots to eat are The Old Post Office, with fine food and a wine list to match, Jacks Pass Road ($$$), and The Laurels Café, which has equally good main dishes and desserts. They have a charming outside seating area, as well. 31 Amuri Street ($$-$$$).

Tip: *If you're headed to Christchurch, you may want to time your travel to have a meal at one of the wineries.*

West to the Lewis Pass

Along the St. James Walkway, Lewis Pass

Continuing west on SH7 from Hanmer Springs, in 65 km (40 miles) you will cross the 907-meter (2,947-foot) Lewis Pass. Many tourists want to drive across one of the passes – either the Lewis, Arthur's or Haast. Arthur's Pass, being farther south, has the more dramatic forest and peaks, the Haast has the incredible rain forest and the Lewis is a gentler pass with silver and red beech stands. The Lewis Pass National Reserve is home to quite a few walks, including the St. James Walkway. At 66 km (41 miles), this trip is not particularly difficult, but a pleasant walk through a sub-alpine area. It is serviced by five main huts which each have bunks for 20. The track is not a loop, and it would be wise to check with the information center in Hanmer or Reefton for up-to-date and local advice on car parks and transport. Typically, it is advisable to begin at the Lewis Pass end and take the bus back to your car. There are also about 20 short walks around the Lewis Pass area – pick up a copy of *Lewis Pass Region* from DoC.

Maruia Springs Thermal Resort is just a blip on the map, but a blip worth a stop. The hot pools are much smaller than at Hanmer and much more naturally set; they are rock-lined, overlook the Maruia

River and make for a very comfortable spot. In addition to the outdoor pools, there are sex-segregated Japanese baths and private, individual spas. There are just 20 rooms in the lodge and there is a café, bar and Japanese restaurant. Pool rates are $10 adults, $5 children; free for in-house guests. Accommodation is standard and comfortable. www.maruiasprings.co.nz, SH7, ☎ 03-523-8840 ($$$).

From Maruia Springs, it's just 20 km (12 miles) farther to Springs Junction where SH65 takes off for Murchison and SH7 continues to the West Coast.

Selwyn District

The Selwyn District incorporates that area to the west of Christchurch that leads through the Torlesse and Craigieburn ranges, over Arthur's Pass and through Arthur's Pass National Park. A region of contrasts – from the flat plains of the west to the high mountains of the middle and east – it is flanked by the Waimakariri River in the north and the Rakaia River in the south. Many north-south travelers barely touch on this region as they dash through on SH1; the real gems of the area, though, are along and beyond SH72 and SH73. To really get to know this region, plan a day or two for some walks around Arthur's Pass – just two hours from Christchurch.

The road across was improved in 2000 and makes a very rewarding scenic drive, probably one of the most amazing in the country. The road slices between the mountains – with summits calling you from both sides of the car. As you pass out of Arthur's Pass village heading toward Otira and the West Coast, there are four places signed for parking, the final three offering good spots to get a photo of Mt. Rolleston, one of the highest peaks in the park.

One of the most popular ways to see this area is on board the TranzAlpine. This 223-km (138-mile) coast-to-coast trip leaves in the morning from Christchurch, arrives mid-day in Greymouth and returns to Christchurch about 6 pm. The trip begins by crossing the broad Canterbury Plains, enters the foothills and gorges of the Torlesse and Craigieburn ranges, then climbs into the Southern Alps through a series of five viaducts and 16 tunnels. At 73 meters (239 feet), the Staircase viaduct is the highest. At Arthur's Pass the train stops for a breather (and to get another locomotive), then goes on to the West Coast. Each direction, the trip takes 4½ hours – you can ei-

ther return on the same day or stay over in Greymouth and visit the nearby attractions before returning to Christchurch the next day. Prices depend on availability, but are around $140 round-trip per adult. Contact any information center or TranzScenic direct at www.tranzscenic.co.nz, ☎ 0800-872-467.

Tip: *Be sure to take warm clothing and waterproof outer wear. Often when the weather is fine on one coast, it's raining on the other. TranzScenic often has package deals going with West Coast accommodation and activity operators – ask your booking agent for details. You might also want to ask about Senior Saver fares, if appropriate.*

◆ Information Sources

Check out www.selwyndistrict.co.nz.

Arthur's Pass Visitor Information Centre is at Arthur's Pass and open daily, 8 am to 5 pm, ☎ 03-318-9211, fax 03-318-9210.

◆ Adventures

On Water

In Springfield, you can go jet-boating with Waimak Alpine Jet. See details under *Adventures on Water* in the Christchurch section, above page 310.

On Foot

The Korowai/Torlesse Tussocklands Park is in the high-country of the Torlessee and Big Ben mountain ranges. Heading west from Christchurch, it is these mountains that you see first. As you approach Porters Pass, you will have a spectacular view of the park – on both sides of SH73 – and the Torlesse Gap, 20 m (65 feet) wide and 40 m (130 feet) deep. The area is an important site for the conservation of high-country plants and ecosystems.

The entrance to Craigieburn Forest Park is about 110 km (68 miles) from Christchurch on SH73. The forest park – notable for the dense beech forest at the lower levels and the incredible rocky, jagged and erosive top levels – is home to many walking tracks, from 20 minutes to six hours. Some of them, like the Camp Saddle, go across scree

slopes that this region is known for. There is also an Environmental Education Centre with an interpretive walking track (20 minutes). Pick up a copy of *Craigieburn Forest Park: Day Walks* from DoC or the Environmental Education Centre. Follow the signs to the Craigieburn Picnic Area on the Broken River ski area road.

Arthur's Pass National Park has many, many day walks and longer tramping tracks. Many are one-way routes to the scenic tops of mountains – including Mounts Temple, Cassidy, Aicken and Bealey; there is also a nice loop tramp connecting Avalanche Peak and Scotts Track. Only do the loop in good weather, but it's great for views of the surrounding area. There is a quick one- to two-hour historic walk around the settlement of Arthur's Pass (pick up a brochure at the visitor center). In addition to the day-walks, Arthur's Pass National Park has at least a dozen two-day and longer tramps. Be sure to go to the visitor center before heading out. The area is also very popular for mountaineering, biking and skiing.

Watchable Wildlife

The kea is the world's only mountain parrot and is commonly seen in the Craigieburn Forest Park and Arthur's Pass National Park (as well as in other alpine areas around New Zealand). They are very inquisitive and great fun to watch – but don't feed them and watch out for loose rubber bits on your car or gear. They will destroy everything. But remember, they are fully protected!

◆ Where to Stay

Things book up fast over the summer, so make your arrangements early.

Arthur's Pass Wilderness Lodge is the most luxurious you'll find. It has a full offering of activities and is on a nature reserve/merino sheep farm. Food is good, wine is good and there are eco- and environmental activities to keep you busy. www.wildernesslodge.co.nz, ☎ 03-318-9246, fax 03-318-9245 ($$$-$$$$).

The Chalet TranzAlpine Lodge has B&B and lodge rooms just a short walk from the visitor center. www.arthurspass.co.nz, ☎ 03-318-9236 ($$-$$$).

The historic Bealey Hotel is 12 km (seven miles) toward Christchurch from Arthur's Pass and sits on the banks of the Waimakariri River. They have motel and backpacker rooms and the hotel was used as a Cobb & Co. stagecoach stop. The moa statue here was a business generator for a former owner. bealeyhotel@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-318-9277 ($-$$).

Alpine Motel is just a short walk from the visitor center and has simple and budget rooms. alpine.motels@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-318-9233 ($$).

The Mountain House Backpackers has lodge rooms and cottages (rent by the room or the whole thing). www.trampers.co.nz, ☎ 03-318-9258 ($-$$).

Arthur's Pass Alpine YHA is set up for trampers and can help you figure out what you want to do when and where. Free gear storage, dorms, twins and doubles. yha.arthurspass@yha.org.nz, ☎ 03-318-9230 ($).

◆ Where to Eat

Oscar's Café & Bar is your best bet for eating if you're not cooking for yourself; the Arthur's Pass Store and Tearoom has a few things on the menu. There's also a restaurant at The Chalet Lodge. It's a small town – population just 100 – so don't expect miracles.

Ashburton

Conveniently defined by the Rakaia and Rangitata Rivers, the Ashburton district reaches from sea to mountains and contains some of the Canterbury plains' most prized agricultural land. It's also home to the Mt. Hutt Forest and Alford Forest. Ashburton is the service center for the area and is about 86 km (53 miles) south of Christchurch on SH1.

Central South Island

Leaving the Ashburton district and heading south on SH72 or SH1, you will cross the Rangitata River and enter what is loosely referred to as the Central South Island. This area includes the inland strip parallel to the coast between the Rangitata and the Waitaki Rivers and the land that edges the Rangitata River to the Southern Alps. The very tidy and charming Geraldine is the inland hub and, heading south, you will reach Temuka and then Timaru, the coastal service center and a pleasant town to poke around. In between, there are lots of little towns strung along the way. Traveling south from Timaru, you'll cross the Waitaki River and be in Otago. If you're not sure where to stay, Geraldine and Timaru offer quite a few reasonably-priced options and are a welcome break from the more touristy towns.

◆ Getting Here

SH1 serves the coastal route and towns of the Central South Island. SH72 continues from the north and joins SH1 in Winchester. Just out of Geraldine, SH79 heads toward the Mckenzie Country and Mt. Cook. From Christchurch to Timaru on SH1, figure two hours; Dunedin is about 2½ hours away, as is Mt. Cook. A straight shot to Queenstown will take you four hours.

From Peel Forest to Geraldine is about 20 minutes, to Timaru 45. From Timaru to Waimate, it's 35 minutes and to Fairlie, 50 minutes.

◆ Information Sources

Check out www.southisland.org.nz for more information on this area.

The friendly Visitor Information Centre has plenty of local knowledge and is on Talbot Street, Geraldine, ☎ 03-693-1006.

The Visitor Information Centre in Temuka is at 72 King Street, ☎ 03-615-9537.

The Timaru Visitor Information Centre is well-staffed, knowledgeable and extremely helpful. info@timar.co.nz, 2 George Street, ☎ 03-688-6163, fax 03-684-0202.

For Waimate, take a look at www.waimate.org.nz or stop in at the Waimate Information Centre, 75 Queen Street, ☎ 03-689-7771.

◆ Adventures

On Water

Sign up with Rangitata Rafts for a trip down the river (see description on page 310) or Hidden Valleys for multi-day rafting and raft/alpine hiking, raft/helicopter, and personalized tours around the area (see the Hurunui section earlier in this chapter page 325 for details).

For a fly-fishing guide, try Kevin Payne in Temuka, www.nzflyfishingguide.com, ☎ 025-227-8142 or 0800-266-105.

Timaru Marine Cruises takes scenic trips out to see the wildlife – Hector's dolphins, penguins, seals, shags. ☎ 03-684-0200.

Mackenzie Country & Aoraki/Mt. Cook

If you're traveling from Christchurch to Wanaka or Queenstown, you will probably want to head inland on SH79 through Geraldine (see section above) and Fairlie. From Fairlie, you cross into the splendid high country of Mackenzie before dropping onto the incredible turquoise Lake Tekapo and Lake Pukaki.

Inside advice: *The speed laws are taken seriously around Mackenzie Country – remember, it's 100 kph (62 mph) on the open road!*

The Mackenzie Country is named after James McKenzie (that's right, it's spelled differently). McKenzie is a bit of an unexpected hero – he became famous for stealing sheep and then grazing them on the land we now call Mackenzie Country. He was imprisoned and escaped (three times), and was asked to leave the country.

Lake Pukaki

Information Sources

For information about the area, stop in at The Resource Centre, 64 Main Street, ☎ 03-685-8496.

Where to Stay

For reliable motel accommodation, try the Mt. Dobson Motel, SH8, just five minutes out of town, ☎ 03-685-8819 or 0800-362-766 ($$), or Aorangi Motel right in town, 26 Denmark Street, ☎ 03-685-8340 ($$).

The Fairlie Gateway Holiday Park has units with bath and kitchen, apartments, and power and tent sites. 10 Allandale Road, ☎ 03-685-8375 or 0800-324-754 ($-$$).

Where to Eat

The Old Library Café is a good bet for vegetarian and other dishes. Good coffee and a pleasant bar, too. 6 Allandale Road ($-$$).

◆ Lake Tekapo

Lake Tekapo

Leaving quiet Fairlie to enter the expanses of the Mackenzie country starts out as a lazy afternoon drive and then, crossing Burkes Pass, you find yourself with stunning, high-country mountains on the sides. You will come around a corner at the sign for Lake Tekapo walk and then the amazing blue/green water of Lake Tekapo jumps off the page. This region must be one of the most beautiful places on earth. The basin where the high-country Lake Tekapo sits is carpeted in gold tussock grass.

Lake Tekapo is a stop for most of the buses that tour around the South Island – making timing very important. If you come into town and there aren't any buses at the Church of the Good Shepard, stop and take a look and a photo or two, because in no time flat you'll be joined by dozens of camera-clicking visitors. This must be the most photographed church in New Zealand. Inside, it's simple and beautiful. Looking out the window at the altar end provides a stunning frame for a picture. The church was built in 1935 as a memorial to the settlers of the region. The Collie Dog Monument just beside the church was put up in 1968 as a tribute to the importance of the working dogs to the settlement of Mackenzie country.

Did you know? *Lake Tekapo is filled with glacial waters and, as the water comes down from the mountains, it carries with it very finely ground rocks – the light that reflects off of them is what makes that beautiful color.*

Information Sources

For information take a look at www.laketekapountouched.co.nz.

At Lake Tekapo, Kiwi Treasures & Gifts & Information serves as the local information center. SH8, ☎ 03-680-6686

Adventures

ON WATER & ON FOOT

Guided options: Tussock and Tarn leads kayaking, mountain biking and tramping trips around the area. Kayaking is available both guided (from $65 half-day) and on your own (from $20). ☎ 03-680-6966 or 027-285-6160. They share space with Mt. Tekapo Mountain Bike Adventures, who rent mountain bikes and camping equipment. They also offer guided rides. Located on the strip. ☎ 027-416-9558.

Alpine Recreation is based in Lake Tekapo, but leads climbing and tramping tours around the whole region. They do a three-day guided crossing of Mt. Cook range, and also ski-touring and climbing courses. www.alpinerecreation.co.nz, ☎ 03-680-6736, fax 03-680-6765.

On a clear day, nothing beats the Mt. John Lookout. It's a three-hour round-trip that takes you to the summit of the mountain – start at the skating rink area and walk around the lakeside of Mt. John; join up with the private road to the summit and the Mt. John walkway, or do the reverse.

Check this out: *Follow the signs to Mt. Cook Salmon Ltd. on the way to Lake Pukaki. You can enjoy a self-guided tour, catch your own (rods supplied), or just buy a fish. This alpine salmon farm is the first in the world to operate in a hydro-electric canal system. $5 for two adults, children free. Open daylight hours. www.mtcooksalmon.com, ☎ 021-370-038.*

ON HORSES

Mackenzie Alpine Trekking Company leads horse rides from one-hour to overnight. matc@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-680-6760 or 0800-628-269.

IN THE AIR

Tekapo Helicopters operates from the salmon farm and all flights are in a four-seater so everyone gets a window. A 10-minute landing on the snow is included on all flights, which range from $180 to $320 (currently the lowest prices in the area). www.tekapohelicopters.co.nz, ☎ 03-680-6229 or 0800-359-835, fax 03-680-6228.

Air Safaris offers a fixed-wing option for touring above the area. They have a full menu of flights, from local ones to trips across to the West Coast. Their special Grand Traverse is a pretty spectacular flight – by Mt. Cook, Tasman and Murchison Glaciers, across the Main Divide, and over the top of both the Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers. It's a 200-km (120-mile) flight. Prices begin at $170 for short flights; inquire for Grand Traverse prices. www.airsafaris.co.nz, departures from Tekapo, and Glentanner (near Mt. Cook), ☎ 03-680-6880.

Where to Stay

Lake Tekapo Scenic Resort has six family units and 12 studios. There's a definite lodge-feel to it. www.laketekapo.com, ☎ 03-680-6808, fax 03-680-6806 ($$$).

Lake Tekapo Lodge is a B&B, with four guest rooms, each with an en-suite bathroom. Three are open to a huge deck area, and the views are fabulous. www.laketekapolodge.co.nz, Aorangi Crescent, ☎ 03-680-6566 or 0800-525-383, fax 03-680-6599 ($$$$).

The Godley Resort Hotel is on the lakeside, and has a range of rooms from budget to superior. www.tekapo.co.nz, SH8, ☎ 03-680-6848, fax 03-680-6873 ($-$$$).

Where to Eat

There isn't a huge range of choices but, in addition to the takeout places and pie shop, you can go to Pepe's, which has pizza and pasta, or Kohan, for Japanese. Both are on the main drag.

◆ Aoraki/Mt. Cook

At 3,755 meters (12,200 feet), Aoraki/Mt. Cook is the highest peak in New Zealand and on a clear day, coming in along Lake Pukaki on SH80, the sight of this mountain can take your breath away. It is one of 22 peaks in Aoraki Mt. Cook National Park that are above 3,050 meters (9,912 feet) and is on the "to see" list of many visitors to New Zealand. The national park encompasses 174,619 acres and was named a national park in 1953. There is no mistaking the importance of rock and ice in this part of the country – virtually no forest exists in the national park; instead there are alpine plants on the mountains and nearly 40% of the park is covered in glacial ice. The five major valley glaciers are the Godley, Murchison, Tasman, Hooker and Mueller. At 27 km (17 miles) long, the Tasman is the longest glacier in the Southern Hemisphere. In places, it is three km (nearly two miles) wide and its ice is up to 600 meters (2,000 feet) deep.

Compared to the gold and brown tussock lower lands, the mountains and glaciers provide a startling contrast. If it's a clear day and the sun is shining, the views of the mountains and glaciers are more than rewarding. It's an absolutely stunning place.

Getting Here

BY CAR

At the base of Lake Pukaki, turn off onto SH80 and follow along the incredible green/blue lake – just aim toward the white, snowy mountains standing like a reward at the end of the road. It's about 55 km (34 miles) to Mt. Cook Village. From Christchurch, it's 330 km (205 miles) and will take you five hours to reach Mt. Cook; from Queenstown, it's 270 km (167 miles) and will take nearly as long.

BY BUS

The Cook Connection runs between Oamaru and Timaru via Twizel. www.cookconnect.co.nz, ☎ 027-458-3211 or 0800-266-526.

InterCity Coachlines also provides service to Mt. Cook. www.intercitycoach.co.nz, ☎ 03-379-9020.

Atomic Shuttles serves Twizel and Lake Tekapo. www.atomictravel.co.nz, ☎ 03-322-8883.

Information Sources

Check out www.mtcook.org.nz.

The DoC Visitor Centre is in the village and is open daily from 8:30 am to 5 pm during the winter, 8:30 am to 6 pm in the summer. Some evenings they are open later and have special events, such as slide shows and talks. They are very well-staffed and stocked with information, last-minute tramping supplies and gifts. mountcookvc@doc.govt.nz, ☎ 03-435-1186.

Adventures

ON WATER

Glacier Sea-kayaking is a one-of-a-kind experience. This three-hour trip takes you on the grayish glacial lake alongside ice shelves and icebergs, and hear dripping glacial water and the moans and groans of avalanches. Stop for a break to watch the avalanches and follow your guide carefully around the ice. It is a great trip. www.mtcook.com, book at the Old Mountaineers Café, ☎ 03-435-1890.

Glacier Explorers take an inflatable boat out on the Tasman Glacier lake. While not as close to the water as you'll be in a kayak, you do get close to some incredible stuff – icebergs, waterfalls, melting ice. $105 adults, $50 children. www.glacierexplorers.co.nz, ☎ 03-435-1077.

ON FOOT

This is a trampers', hikers' and mountaineers' wonderland but beware – the weather around here is seriously changeable and the alpine routes are recommended for experienced trampers. There are alpine guiding compa-

nies in the village and, if you are interested in mountaineering, it would be a good idea to contact them.

There are 10 short and/or day-walks around the village that go into the main valleys. Pick up a copy of *Walks in Mount Cook National Park*. The most popular short walk goes to the Hooker Valley. Over the course of nine km (five miles) and taking about three to four hours, you will cross two swing bridges at the bottom of Mueller Lake and then climb to the Alpine Memorial. The track ends at Hooker Lake. The most popular short, but challenging, walk is to the Ball Shelter. This will take you about six hours (14 km/nine miles) and includes a good amount of climbing. It's used as a stop for longer trips higher up, but you can just stay the night and then return either by way of the Tasman Valley or the Blue Lakes.

Tip: *Drop into the DoC office in the village – they are extremely helpful and have lists of walks of varying lengths.*

Contact Alpine Guides for mountaineering or guiding options. www.alpineguides.co.nz, ☎ 03-435-1834.

You can contact Charlie Hobbs at Southern Alps Guiding, www.mtcook.com, ☎ 03-435-1890, for mountaineering and ski guiding on the glaciers. They also run the Old Mountaineers' Café (see below under *Where to Eat*) and a sea kayaking company (see above).

IN THE AIR

The Helicopter Line has three set trips from 20 to 45 minutes. All trips have a landing on the snow and they also do charters into huts. Prices start at $185 per person. www.helicopterline.co.nz. Based at Glentannter, ☎ 0800-650-651.

Here's something unusual – Mount Cook Ski Planes. The airplanes are outfitted with skis and you fly up the glacier and land on the snow. There are four set tours, ranging from 25 to 55 minutes with prices beginning at $190. www.mtcookskiplanes.com. Mt. Cook Airport, ☎ 0800-800-702.

ON BIKES

Alan's 4WD Tours runs 2½-hour trips to the Tasman Glacier. alan@mountcooktours.co.nz, ☎ 03-435-0441.

Where to Stay

Virtually all the accommodations are owned by The Hermitage, which is a decidedly large building at the base of the valley. It's very well-run and a modern, clean, lovely place to stay. If you can, get a room that looks out on the mountain. The Hermitage also runs the Glencoe Lodge and the Mount Cook Motel and Chalets. www.mount-cook.com, ☎ 03-435-1809 or 0800-686-800, fax 03-435-1879 ($$$-$$$$).

The Mt. Cook YHA is your other option and is a good alternative with lots of rooms, a knowledgeable staff and plenty of facilities. yhamtck@yha.org.nz, corner of Bowen Drive and Kitchener Drive, ☎ 03-435-1820 ($).

The Glentanner Park Holiday Park, 15 minutes from Mt. Cook at the site of Glentanner airport, has cabins, tents and campervan sites. It's set on a working sheep station, alongside Lake Pukaki. www.glentanner.co.nz, SH80, ☎ 03-435-1855, fax 03-435-1854 ($-$$).

Pukaki Homestay, between the turnoff on SH80 and Glentanner has a cottage, cabins, swimming pool and lake access. They also run Pukaki Downs Backpackers and have a dinner with bed and breakfast option. www.pukakihomestay.co.nz, ☎ 03-435-3240 or 027-271-5330, fax 03-435-3241 ($-$$).

Where to Eat

The Old Mountaineers' Café is run by Charlie Hobbs, who is not an old mountaineer at all, but who is a well-respected guide and mountain man. The food and atmosphere of the place is great. Next to the DoC office. ☎ 03-435-1890 ($$).

The Hermitage has a café, small shop and an à la carte restaurant ($-$$).

Otago

Introduction

Otago commands a large portion of the South Island, in terms of space, variety and activities. Dunedin, the provincial capital, is the most Scottish of New Zealand's cities, home to the oldest university and the gateway to the spectacular Otago Peninsula. Queenstown, sitting on the shores of the majestic Lake Wakatipu, is the self-professed Adventure Capital of the World and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in New Zealand. Ripe with walking tracks and other natural activities, Queenstown is a destination not just for the adrenaline set. Wanaka, less than an hour away, is a favorite spot for domestic and international visitors and has a more laid-back manner. The gold country of Central Otago has some of the most incredible scenery around – and makes for some easy-going poking and prodding around small-town New Zealand.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Information Sources 343
- Dunedin 343
- Otago Peninsula 354
- Queenstown 359
- Arrowtown 373
- Wanaka 375
- Central Otago 388
- Dunedin to Roxborough Valley 393
- The Maniototo 394
- Coastal Otago 400
- Oamaru 402
- Waitaki 405

Information Sources

Each town has its own information center and the whole of the region isn't covered by one body. For regional sites, check out www.dunedinnz.com, www.queenstown-nz.co.nz, www.lakewanaka.co.nz and www.tco.org.nz.

Dunedin

Dunedin, a flourishing, energetic university town, is the main center of Otago and is often referred to as New Zealand's most Scottish city – the "Edinburgh of the South." Its streets are lined with shops,

cafés and restaurants and its galleries and museums are just short walks from most accommodation. A compact city, Dunedin is at the base of the Otago Harbour, where the Otago Peninsula – New Zealand's first and perhaps premier eco-tourism area – juts into the sea. The marine life around the peninsula is fabulous and this area is home to many species found nowhere else. Like much of New Zealand, Dunedin's early history is volcanic, with a series of eruptions that formed the hills that ring the city and the harbor. The coast around Dunedin is notable for cliff faces, rock formations and sea caves, as well as having beaches that are popular for (chilly) swimming and surfing.

Did you know? *Otago University was the first university in New Zealand.*

Local Maori history began with fishing in the coastal bays and inland hunting, evolving into the settlement of both sides of the harbor, which was named Otakau. The area was the site of a long and bloody feud between the three tribes in the area, resulting in many deaths. European settlement began with the whalers and sealers, who brought more death through disease. More than 300 permanent settlers arrived in the same year, courtesy of the New Zealand Company, who chose Dunedin as the site for a Scottish community. In 1849, twice as many settlers from England and Ireland arrived, but the Scottish influence was already strong enough to survive. It was a small town and the values of the community were those of the Scottish Free Church until the discovery of gold in Otago. The gold rush that followed influenced Dunedin's development like nothing else – during the gold-mining era, Dunedin was the richest, biggest and most powerful city in New Zealand. It was during the time of gold fever that Otago University was founded and built, as were Otago Boys and Otago Girls High Schools. Businesses flourished and buildings were erected.

◆ Getting Here

By Air

The Dunedin airport is about 30 km (18 miles) south of town on SH1. It is an international airport with service to Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Within New Zealand, flights serve Queenstown, Invercargill, Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland. Rental cars are available at the airport, as are door-to-door shuttle services (taxi service is pricy).

By Car

The drive south to Dunedin on SH1 from Christchurch takes about 4½ hours. From Queenstown, via SH6, 8 and 1, it's four hours; and from Invercargill, the drive north on SH1 is two hours.

By Bus

Connections around the South Island are available to and from Dunedin. In addition to those listed, there are other door-to-door services available. Contact an information center for details.

In addition to stopping at the Dunedin airport and the Dunedin Botanic Garden, InterCity Coachlines, www.intercitycoach.co.nz, arrives at Inter City Travel, 205 St. Andrew Street. ☎ 03-477-8860 or 03 477-9238, fax 03-477-8859.

Atomic Shuttles services most of the South Island, including inland routes to Central Otago. They arrive and depart from the Dunedin Rail station at the corner of Anzac and Stuart Streets, www.atomictravel.co.nz, ☎ 03-477-4449.

South Island Connection departs from the Information Centre in The Octagon. They leave at the ungodly hour of 1 am to head north, but arrive in Christchurch by 6 am – making connections to other points much easier. They also service the Christchurch airport on this run. www.southislandconnections.co.nz, ☎ 03-366-6633.

Catch-A-Bus provides door-to-door service to and from Dunedin and Central Otago, including Wanaka. ☎ 03-479-9960.

By Train

Train service to Dunedin is currently limited to the scenic Taieri Gorge. See page 348 for details.

◆ Tourist Information

Tourism Dunedin does a fabulous job of creating maps and visitor guides for the area. They can be visited at www.dunedinnz.com. Another good site to visit is www.cityofdunedin.com.

The Visitor Information Centre, visitor.centre@dcc.govt.co.nz, is conveniently located on The Octagon, ☎ 03-474-3300, fax 03-474-3311.

The DoC area conservancy office is open weekdays from 8:30 am to 5 pm and is located at 77 Lower Stuart Street, ☎ 03-477-0677.

◆ Adventures

On Foot

The weather in Dunedin can quickly change – make sure you take plenty of warm clothes! Drop into the visitor center for an up-to-date map of local walking tracks around Dunedin. DoC also has brochures on walks around the area.

Tunnel Beach, at the foot of sandstone cliffs, is accessible by foot only, and is at the end of a 1½-km (about one mile) walk that takes you through a handmade rock tunnel. It's a favorite summer spot and is notable for visual evidence of the area's geology.

There is a series of walking tracks around the city, particularly to the east and west of SH1 as you exit the city going north. The land on the eastern side of SH1 makes the northern boundary of the Otago Harbour and is a good choice for day-walks, especially on fine days. From the end of Norwood Street, follow the track uphill to Mt. Cargill for spectacular (and very windy) views and then continue on to The Organ Pipes (giant granite rock columns). The same sites are accessible by way of Hall Road to The Organ Pipes and up to Mt. Cargill. Either way, allow three to four hours round-trip and expect a bit of a climb.

In Food & Beer

Cadbury makes 85% of the chocolate eaten in New Zealand and has to work for six months to produce all the eggs consumed in New Zealand just during the Easter season.

Cadbury World is a must if you are traveling with kids, enjoyable if you're not. Depending on what's happening, you'll see various stages of chocolate making and be given plenty of samples! A good history of the company (and chocolate) starts the tour, which takes a little over an hour. Book ahead; tours every half-hour seven days a week, but they do fill up. Adult $14, children $8. www.cadburyworld.co.nz, 280 Cumberland Street, ☎ 03-467-7967 or 0800-223-287.

Tours of Speights Brewery take about 90 minutes and end in the pub/tasting room, where they tend to carry on for quite a while longer. I recommend taking the 7 pm tour if you can. Adults $12, children $4. Bookings essential. www.speights.co.nz, 200 Rattray Street, ☎/fax 03-477-7697.

◆ Sightseeing

The Dunedin Public Art Gallery is filled with fantastic exhibitions of current and early art. The gallery often hosts traveling exhibits that don't make it to other New Zealand sites. Free admission, charges for special exhibits. Open daily, 10 am-5 pm, www.dunedin.art.museum, 30 The Octagon, ☎ 03-474-3240, fax 03-474-3250.

Olveston House was left to the city in 1967 by the last surviving member of the influential and privileged Dunedin Theoman family.

The house was quite modern for its time (built in the early 1900s, it had central heat and an internal telephone system) and is filled with souvenirs of the family's travels around the world. $13 adults, $4 children. Tours daily, limited to 15, so bookings are essential. www.olveston.co.nz, 42 Royal Terrace, ☎ 03-477-3320 or 0800-100-880.

One of my favorite museums in New Zealand is the Otago Museum which is over 125 years old. I especially enjoy the Southern Land, Southern People exhibit. It's a fabulous exhibit on the natural and cultural heritage of the southern part of the South Island. The Otago Museum has the most complete collection of moas in the world, with 10 species on display. Also take time to see the interactive Discovery World and Pacific Culture Galleries. Open from 10 am to 5 pm, 419 Great King Street, ☎ 03-474-7474, fax 03-477-5993.

Things you'll learn: *57 birds have become extinct in New Zealand; about half of the world's fossilized penguins have been found in Southland (including giant penguins that are twice the size of emperors); and freshwater crocodiles once lived near St. Bathans in Central Otago.*

Taieri Gorge Railway

The Taieri Gorge Railway leaves daily from the Dunedin Railway Station. It's pronounced "Tie-ree," by the way, and quickly, without any accent. This historic train (with a mixture of refurbished old and new carriages) travels to either Pukerangi (58 km/36 miles) or Middlemarch (77 km/48 miles) and the beginning of the Otago Central Rail Trail. The tracks, built between 1879 and 1921, were a notable engineering feat of their time. Leaving Dunedin, you first travel through rich agricultural areas before breaking into the Taieri Gorge, with steep schist walls. During the winter, the snow makes for lovely photographs, as do the remote bridges and homesteads along the way.

You can arrange for bus transport from Middlemarch to Queenstown, or for those interested in getting some exercise, bring a bike along and ride the Rail Trail from Middlemarch to Alexandra (150 km/93 miles, accommodation available along the way). For more information on the Rail Trail, see the Central Otago section (page 389). Round-trips are four hours to Pukerangi and five hours to Middlemarch. Bookings are essential. Train departure times vary depending on season. One-way fares begin at $36.50 adults (one child free per adult, additional children $10); round-trip fares begin at $57 for adults. www.taieri.co.nz, ☎ 03-477-4449.

The University Book Shop is a great one! Don't miss it. 378 Great King Street.

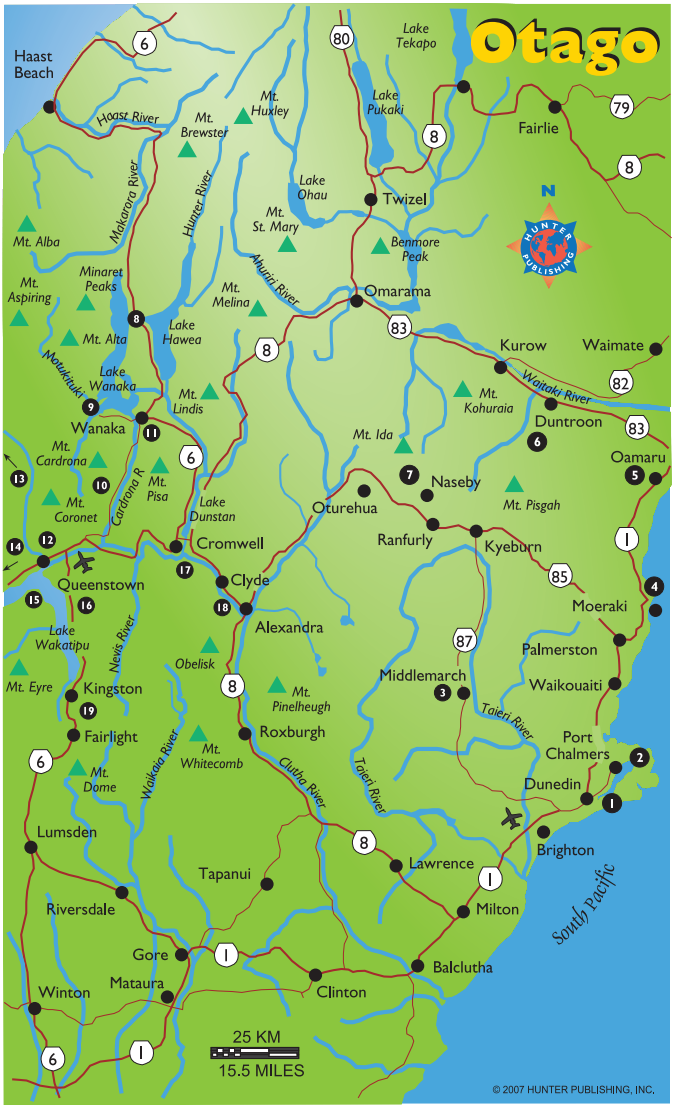
Baldwin Street has the reputation of being the steepest street in New Zealand, and reportedly, the world. Otago University, the oldest university in New Zealand, was founded in 1869 and makes a good spot for wandering around. The clock tower at the administration building on Leith Street is a Dunedin landmark and is frequently visited and photographed.

◆ Where to Stay

McGavin's brewery used to be on the grounds of the Skyline Leisure Lodge, which is conveniently located beside the Botanic Garden. It's a pleasant, recently renovated facility with about 75 suites and standard double rooms. McGavin's Restaurant and Bar is open for breakfast and dinner. www.leisurelodge.net.nz, Duke Street, ☎ 03-477-5360 or 0800-334-123, fax 03-477-5460 ($$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Per room, double occupancy	
$	under NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$101-$175
$$$$	over NZ$175

Dunedin Scenic Circle Southern Cross Hotel is in a gorgeous old building dating back to 1883. The hotel has 178 rooms (suites, superiors and standard rooms) three restaurants, two bars and is home to the Dunedin Casino. southern.cross@scenic-circle.co.nz, at the corner of Princes & High Streets, ☎ 03-477-0752, fax 03-477-5776 ($$$-$$$$).


Otago
Haast Beach
Haast River
Mt. Brewster
Mt. Huxley
Lake Tekapo
Lake Pukaki
Fairlie
Makarora River
Hunter River
Lake Ohau
Twizel
Mt. Alba
Mt. St. Mary
Benmore Peak
Minaret Peaks
Mt. Aspiring
Mt. Melina
Ahuriri River
Omarama
Mt. Alta
Lake Hawea
Kurow
Waimate
Waitaki River
Matukituki
Lake Wanaka
Mt. Lindis
Mt. Kohuraia
Duntroon
Wanaka
Mt. Ida
Mt. Cardrona
Oamaru
Cardrona R
Mt. Pisa
Naseby
Mt. Coronet
Lake Dunstan
Oturehua
Mt. Pisgah
Ranfurly
Kyeburn
Cromwell
Queenstown
Clyde
Moeraki
Lake Wakatipu
Alexandra
Nevis River
Palmerston
Obelisk
Middlemarch
Mt. Eyre
Kingston
Mt. Pinelheugh
Waikouaiti
Taieri River
Fairlight
Roxburgh
Port Chalmers
Waikaia River
Mt. Whitecomb
Clutha River
Taieri River
Mt. Dome
Dunedin
Lumsden
Brighton
Tapanui
Lawrence
Riversdale
Milton
South Pacific
Gore
Balclutha
Mataura
Clinton
Winton
25 KM
15.5 MILES
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St. Paul's Cathedral, Dunedin

1. St. Clair & St. Kilda Beaches, St. Clair Saltwater Pool, Tunnel Beach, Mt. Cargill, Organ Pipes, Silver Stream Water Race-Tracks, Cadbury Chocolate World, Speight's Brewery, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Olveston House, Otago Museum, Otago Settlers Museum, New Zealand Sports Hall of Fame, Botanic Garden
2. New Zealand Marine Studies Centre, Royal Albatross Centre at Taiaroa Head, Fort Taiaroa, Larnach Castle, Glenfalloch Woodland Gardens, Port Chalmers Museum, Flagstaff Lookout, Wellers Rock, Otakau Marae
3. Taieri Gorge Vintage Steam Train, Otago Rail Trail
4. Moeraki Boulders
5. Oamaru Blue Penguin Colony
6. Elephant Rocks, Vanished World Fossil Trail, Dansey's Pass
7. Naseby Forest, Settlers' Museum, Motoring Museum
8. Lake Hawea Neck, Kidds Bush
9. Glendhu Bay, Mt. Aspiring National Park, Rob Roy Glacier, Treble Cone Ski Area
10. Lakes District Museum & Gallery, Macetown (mining era ghost town)
11. Wanaka Airport, Transport & Toy Museum, Paradiso Cinema, Stuart Landsborough's Puzzling World, NZ Fighter Pilots' Museum, Hero Mountain-Mt. Roy Track
12. Queenstown Gardens, TSS Earnslaw, Skycity Queenstown Casino, Ben Lomond & One-Mile Creek Walks, Rippon Vineyard
13. Rees-Dart Track
14. Greenstone & Caples Tracks, Glenorchy, Kinloch
15. Cecil & Walter Peaks
16. The Remarkables
17. Cromwell Information Centre & Museum, Cromwell Top Ten Holiday Park, Bannockburn Wineries, Nevis Valley, Kawarau Gorge
18. Alexander Museum & Art Gallery, Clyde Lookout Point & River Walk
19. Kingston Flyer Railway

The Leviathan Heritage Hotel was built in 1884 and has been a hotel ever since. It's a bit of a rabbit warren, with hallways going here and there and accommodation options ranging from backpacker hostel to lovely suites. leviathan@xtra.co.nz, 27 Queens Gardens, ☎ 03-477-3160 or 0800-773-773, fax 03-477-2385 ($-$$$).

526 George Street is a smoke-free "boutique hotel" housed in a beautiful 1907 building originally constructed as a residence for a surgeon's family. The rooms are spacious, the lounge is comfortable (with a big screen TV, stereo and piano), and a continental breakfast is included. www.hotel526.co.nz, 526 George, ☎ 03-477-1261 or 0800-779-779, fax 03-477-1268 ($$$).

Cargills Hotel has singles, doubles, studios and family units, most of which are around a center courtyard, which is beautiful in the spring when the cherry trees are blossoming. A real plus here is the complimentary guest laundry and 24-hour room service. www.cargills.co.nz, 678 George, ☎ 03-477-7983 or 0800-737-378, fax 03-477-8098 ($$$).

858 George Street Motel is a13-unit community. It was Regional Winner for Architecture in 2000, the year they opened. Inside, the units are tastefully appointed and two can be combined to make a large two-level family or group apartment. Cooked or continental breakfast is available and units have kitchen facilities. This must be one of the best value accommodations around. www.858georgestreetmotel.co.nz, 858 George, ☎/fax 03-474-0047 or 0800-858-999 ($$$).

Dunedin Central Backpackers has twin, double, shared-bath and dorm (up to 11 bed) rooms. duncb_nz@yahoo.co.nz, 243 Moray Place, ☎ 03-477-9985 or 0800-432-2322, fax 03-477-9822 ($).

On a residential street, housed in two big old historic homes, is Manor House Backpackers. They have twins, doubles and dorms and – get this – three kitchens. Even though it can hold up to 70, it feels more like home than most backpacker hostels. www.manorhousebackpackers.co.nz, 28 Manor Place, ☎/fax 03-477-0484 ($).

Elm Lodge Backpackers is near the center of town, but in a residential neighborhood. It's situated on a hill, in an older house and has a nice garden and a BBQ. They also offer wildlife tours of the penin-

sula. www.elmwildlifetours.co.nz, 74 Elm Row, ☎ 03-474-1872 or 0800-356-563 ($).

Queens Gardens Backpackers is in an historic hotel with singles, doubles, twins, dorms and family rooms. Close to downtown, this is a really cool old building. 42 Queens Gardens, ☎ 03-479-2175 or 0800-225-228, fax 03-479-0700 ($).

◆ Where to Eat

Like any university town and regional center, there are plenty of choices for good eats. Just take a wander down George Street and you'll find any number of noodle houses, kebab shops, cafés, ethnic restaurants, not to mention all the fine dining options that make choosing difficult.

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée	
$	under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$21-$30
$$$$	over NZ$30

Esplanade at St. Clair Beach has great pizza, pasta and seafood, it's right on the beach and off the typical tourist route. On the Esplanade at St. Clair Beach. ☎ 03-456-2544 ($$-$$$).

Governors has blackboard menus, full breakfast served all day, build-your-own pizza and sandwiches, and really good smoothies. A student hang-out kind of place and well worth a stop. 438 George Street ($-$$).

2 Chefs has upstairs views of St. Knox Church, fashionable, delicious food and a good wine list. 428 George Street, ☎ 03-477-9117 ($$$).

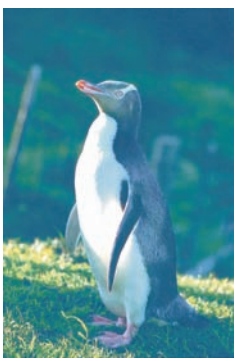
Capers is a must for breakfast, with lunch a close second. They open at 7 am, earlier than most of the local cafés. 412 George Street ($).

The very tasty and trendy Nova Café is in the same building as the Dunedin Public Art Gallery (page 347). Good choice for coffee or a meal. On The Octagon ($$).

The Ra Bar Street Bar and Café is on the Octagon, open for breakfast, lunch and dinner and one of those lively places day or night. Might be a good idea to book for dinner. 21 The Octagon, ☎ 03-477-6080 ($-$$$).

Cargills Hotel Restaurant and Bar has won the NZ beef and lamb award for three years, including 2003. It's a brasserie and open from 7 am to 10 pm with a tempting à la carte menu. 678 George Street. ☎ 03-477-7983 ($$-$$$).

Otago Peninsula



Yellow-eyed penguin

The Otago Peninsula, just a few minutes drive from the city center, is a magical place and should be a mandatory stop on the itinerary of every visitor to New Zealand. Subtropical and subantarctic waters come together off Dunedin's shore – creating an unusual marine environment, feeding place, and home for some of the rarest marine life in the world. The yellow-eyed penguin, one of the most endangered species, makes its home here, as does the little blue penguin, the royal albatross, and the Stewart Island shag. There are also seals and many different seabirds. Driving from the city center to Taiaroa Head, allow an hour, but you'll need at least a day to explore the Peninsula. A round-trip of the peninsula is about 64 km (40 miles). Pick up a free *Visitors Guide to the Otago Peninsula* at the information center.

◆ Adventures

On Foot

The peninsula is filled with walking tracks, from five minutes to three hours, and the handy little guide, *Otago Peninsula Tracks*, describes 19 of them. Get a copy at the information center.

Watchable Wildlife

The New Zealand Marine Studies Centre and Aquarium at Portobello is a working laboratory for the University of Otago and makes a great first stop on a wildlife tour of the peninsula. There are touch tanks and static displays; you'll see sea-horses, anemones, sharks, and fish indigenous to the area. Celebrating its 100th birth-

day in 2004, it is the oldest marine research laboratory in Australasia and, because it is a working laboratory, there are always marine-studies students working around the site. Guided tours are available at 10:30 daily and are a fantastic way to tour the aquarium, get some behind-the-scenes stories, find out about on-going research projects, and learn about the wildlife on the peninsula. New in 2003 are cooperative trips with Wild39 Earth Adventures – spend the first part of your day at the aquarium learning about the marine life and then paddle out to experience sea life first-hand. For those wishing to go on their own, the facility is open daily from 12 noon to 4:30 pm. $7 adults, $3 children, $14 family ($16 adults/$8 children for guided tour). www.otago.ac.nz/marinestudies, ☎ 03-479-5836, fax 03-479-5844.

If you don't fancy a combined tour with the aquarium and just want to go sea kayaking, you can do that with Wild Earth Adventures Ltd. Half-day to multi-day tours, from $79 per person. www.wildearth.co.nz, ☎ 03-473-6535, fax 03-473-6539.

Did you know? *Dunedin is the shark "hot spot" of New Zealand, with over 13 different types of sharks found along the Otago coastline.*

The Royal Albatross Centre at Taiaroa Head is a fantastic experience and should not be missed. Not only is this is the only mainland breeding colony of albatross in the world, it's teeming with other wildlife as well, including the rare Stewart Island shag. The Royal albatross are amazing birds – there are only two colonies in the world, the one at Taiaroa Head and another in the Chatham Islands. The birds have a wingspan of over three meters (nearly 10 feet), are capable of speeds over 100 kilometers (62 miles) per hour, and can swallow a one-meter (39-inch) squid whole. Spending 80% of their life at sea, every two years they come to land – only to find a mate and to breed. Their lifecycle goes something like this: September to October, adults arrive at Taiaroa Head and breed. Eggs are laid in November and incubated until January when the chicks hatch. Until the end of March, one parent is with the chick at all times, while the other goes off to feed; by April, the chicks are left alone, the parents returning

only to feed them. By the following September, the new chick takes off for its first flight and doesn't return for four to five years!

The best time to come is from December to February, when the teenagers are going to their parties and the young birds are being guarded by one or the other parent; during breeding season (September to November) the viewing area is closed. Open daily except Christmas, tours leave every half-hour, beginning at 9 am during summer, 9:30 am hourly in winter. On Tuesdays, tours begin at 11:30. Consider going on the 6 pm tour and staying for dinner at the restaurant. The center has a gift shop with many local products. Tour costs vary depending on time of year. Adults pay $12-30; children $6-15. www.albatross.org.nz, ☎ 03-478-0499, fax 03-478-0575.

Yellow-eyed penguin at Penguin Place

Penguin Place is a private reserve and a stop that is imperative if you'll be heading farther south along the coast and want to view penguins. A guided trip will give you the best understanding of how to view and appreciate the birds. The way the hides are built, you are very close to the birds, but without their knowledge. This made it easier for me to spot penguins as I traveled on. Tours leave every 30 minutes from 10:15 am until 90 minutes prior to sunset. www.penguin-place.co.nz, ☎ 03-478-0286, fax 03-478-0257.

YEPs

The Hoiho ("noise shouter") or yellow-eyed penguin (YEP) is one of the rarest of the world's 17 breeds of penguin. Breeding only on outlying islands and on the southern coast of New Zealand, it was originally found as far north as Marlborough.

The best time to view penguins is late in the afternoon, when the adults are coming home from fishing. The penguins will not land on the beach if they see people (or

other predators). Always view the birds from hides and do not, under any circumstances, approach the birds.

In addition to Penguin Place on the Otago Peninsula, there are some public viewing sites along the Otago Coast. You can get more information from the visitor centers in Dunedin, Oamaru, the Catlins, and Invercargill. Public viewing hides include: Bushy Beach, Katiki Point, Nugget Point and Sandfly Bay.

◆ Sightseeing

If you drive out of the city on Portobello Road, the first tourist stop is Glenfalloch Woodland Gardens, about 12 km (seven miles) down the road, where there are garden walks, a café and wine bar, pottery and crafts. Popular with rhododendron and azalea lovers, the gardens are home to many free-flying native birds.

Larnach Castle

Larnach Castle, the only castle in New Zealand, is on the Otago Peninsula. The road going to the castle is lined with massive trees and the castle grounds are great fun to walk around and explore, but the castle itself seems a bit out of place. The castle has been undergoing restoration since the 1960s. Open daily, 9 am to 5 pm, $15 adults $6 children for entry to castle and entire grounds, $8 adults, $3 per child for just the gardens, stable and ballroom. www.larnarchcastle.co.nz, 16 km (10 miles) from town on Castlewood Road, ☎ 03-476-1616.

Tours

Wellers Rock (named to commemorate the Weller brothers' whaling station) is the departure spot for one-hour trips with Monarch Wildlife Cruises & Tours. Half- and full-day trips leave from the city harbor in Dunedin. Wildlife you're likely to see includes penguins, seals, albatross, shags and sheerwaters. There are five daily departures in summer and two in winter – you can book at the information center or directly. Prices begin at $30 for adults, $10 for children on one-hour trips and range up to $185 for a full-day peninsula package. www.wildlife.co.nz, ☎ 03-477-4276, fax 03-477-4275.

Just past The Royal Albatross Centre at Taiaroa Head (see page 355) is Nature's Wonders Naturally. Here, you can take a 45- to 60-minute tour around private property, viewing penguins, fur seals, sea lions and birds on an all-terrain eight-wheel, amphibious Argo vehicle. It's a fun way to see the sites and get a taste of living on a remote, windswept farm. Prices begin at $30 adults, $25 children for the Argo option. Bus tour prices begin at $25 adults, $12.50 children. Tours go out every day, but bookings are essential. www.natureswondersnaturally.com, ☎ 03-478-1150, fax 03-478-0714.

Elm Wildlife Tours operates five- to six-hour tours leaving from Dunedin and taking in the sites and the marine life on the peninsula – royal albatross, fur seals, little blue penguins, yellow-eyed penguins, and Hooker's sea lions. They also run a two-day tour to the Catlins. Prices begin at $62. www.elmwildlifetours.co.nz, ☎ 03-474-1872 or 0800-356-563, fax 03-474-8808.

◆ Where to Stay

Penguin Place Lodge is on the premises of Penguin Place and includes a bath and kitchen. It's very comfortable and clean. www.penguin-place.co.nz, Pakihau Road, Harington Point. ☎ 03-478-0286 ($).

Another budget accommodation is McFarmers Backpackers. They have doubles, dorms and a separate cottage. This place seems like a leftover from the hippie era. mcfarmersbackackers@hotmail.com, 774 Portobello Road, ☎ 03-478-0389 ($).

The Portobello Village Tourist Park has on-site campers and tourist apartments as well as tent and power sites. 27 Hereweka Street, ☎ 03-478-0359 ($).

◆ Where to Eat

The Royal Albatross Centre restaurant is open from 9 am in the summer and stays open until 10 pm. It's a perfect place to have a meal after a day of eco-tours. Fish and seafood are often on the dinner menu. Lunch is pies, soups, sandwiches ($-$$).

Stop Into Coffee is a good coffee shop in Portobello and makes for a great spot to grab something to eat and get advice about the Peninsula. 699 Highcliffe Road, ☎ 03-478-0555 ($).

1908 Café and Bar has lunch and dinner from a changing blackboard menu. Very pleasant place, lots of fresh fish and seafood but pricey. 7 Harington Road, Portobello ($$$).

Queenstown

With Coronet Peak to the north, the Remarkables to the east, and Cecil and Walter Peaks across Lake Wakatipu, Queenstown is surrounded by eye candy.

Queenstown Bay

The first Maori were drawn to the area in search of pounamu (greenstone), which they found around Glenorchy. Otago pounamu was especially valuable to the Maori for its pearly grey-green color. The area was not home to a permanent Maori population and Queenstown, like much of inland New Zealand, had its European beginning in farming. Things were fairly low-key for the first few years that settlers William Gilbert Rees and Nicholas von Tunzleman farmed on opposite sides of Lake Wakatipu. But once gold was discovered in the Shotover River, their lifestyles, and the complexion of Queenstown, changed markedly. The population swelled to 8,500 virtually overnight and it seems even today there's no stopping things. Since the 1940s, development around Queenstown has been

with the tourist in mind – today, over 70% of the town's economy comes from tourism.

◆ Getting Here

By Air

Queenstown International Airport connects the region with Australia and the rest of New Zealand and landing in Queenstown could be considered your first adventure activity – it's hard to believe how close a big airplane can get to a mountain. There are taxis and the airport Super Shuttle to whisk you away to your accommodation. The airport is served by Air New Zealand (www.airnewzealand.co.nz, ☎ 09-357-3000 or 0800-737-000), Origin Pacific (www.originpacific.co.nz, ☎ 0800-302-302) and Qantas (www.qantas.co.nz, ☎ 0800-808-767).

By Car

Regardless of where you start your day, you will arrive in Queenstown via SH6. It's about an hour from Wanaka, 2½ hours from Invercargill and about four from Dunedin.

By Bus

InterCity Coachlines between Queenstown, Invercargill, Te Anau, Dunedin and Christchurch. www.intercitycoach.co.nz.

Atomic Shuttles between Queenstown, Dunedin, and Invercargill (via Gore). www.atomictravel.co.nz, ☎ 03-214-6243 or 03-218-9000.

By Train

While there is no rail service direct to Queenstown, the Queenstown-Dunedin Track & Trail coach-and-train combo link the two cities. It's a six-hour trip, taking the Taieri Gorge train to Middlemarch and then the coach to Queenstown (or reverse). $110 adults, $55 children. In summer, departs Dunedin at 2:30 pm and Queenstown at 12 noon; in winter, at 12:30 pm from Dunedin and 10 am from Queenstown. www.transportplace.co.nz

◆ Information

For regional information check out www.queenstown-nz.co.nz.

The official iSITE information office is the Queenstown Visitor Centre, qvc@xtra.co.nz, Clock Tower Building, corner Shotover and Camp streets, ☎ 03-442-4100 fax 03-442-8907.

The very helpful Department of Conservation (DoC) office will make hut bookings and provide plenty of information. www.doc.govt.nz, 37 Shotover Street, ☎ 03-442-7933.

Lake Hayes, Queenstown

◆ Adventures

Try a combo. There are just too many to list, but most operators are hooked up with other operators and you can cut and paste any combination of helicopter, raft, bungy jumping and jet-boat activities into a package. Probably the best advice I can give you is to go into one of the booking offices and tell them the kinds of activities you want to do and let them present your options.

On the Water

JET-BOATS

Shotover Jet is the most famous jet-boat company and operates in the narrow canyon of the Shotover River, spinning 360s all the way, or so it seems. Twin-jet-engine boats were introduced in 2003 and you get really wet during the half-hour trip. I've had the chance to enjoy quite a few jet-boat rides and I think the canyons of the Shotover make this the best trip out there. $89 adults. www.shotoverjet.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-8570 or 0800-746-868.

Kawarau Jet or K Jet, based right in Queenstown, leaves from the jetty at the end of the mall and goes through Lake Wakatipu to the Kawarau River and then the Shotover. Trips last one hour and cover over 40 km (24 miles); there is also the option of combining a jet-boat ride with wine tasting, a cellar tour and lunch at Gibbston Valley Winery. $75 adults www.kjet.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-6142 or 0800-529-272.

Dart River Safaris is more than just a thrilling jet-boat ride… trips leave from Glenorchy (transport available) and include a jet-boat ride, a 30- to 40-minute forest walk and a 30- to 40-minute 4X4 tour. Another fun option is to take the jet-boat up the river and funyak back down – an on-the-water trip suitable for most ages. There are two trips a day. Prices begin at $159 adults, $79.50 children. www.dartriver.co.nz, www.funyaks.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9992 or 0800-327-853.

RAFTING

Depending on the level of adventure you're looking for, rafting trips are available on both the Shotover and Kawarau Rivers. The Shotover is graded higher (Grades III to V) and has more big rapids; the milder Kawarau River trip is good for those with less confidence and for an added thrill, takes you under the AJ Hackett bungy bridge. Most trips take about 4½ hours round-trip, including transport. Operators include: Queenstown Rafting,

www.rafting.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9792 or 0800-723-8464; Extreme Green Rafting, www.nzraft.com, ☎ 03-442-8517; Challenge Rafting, www.raft.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-7318 or 0800-423-836. Prices for all the companies begin about $135 and can be set up in a multitude of combinations, with heli-this and bungy-that. It's best to have a chat at the booking office or with the operator about your options.

If you're looking for something more than just a half-day trip, then sign up for the Landsborough Wilderness Rafting trip, a three-day camping/rafting expedition that takes you from Queenstown to Westland. Access to the start of the trip is by helicopter or fixed-wing plane, following a road journey. Contact Queenstown Rafting, www.rafting.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9792 or 0800-723-8464, or Hidden Valleys, www.hiddenvalleys.co.nz, ☎ 03-696-3560.

CANYONING & OTHER RIVER PLAY

Put your feet into fins, your head into a helmet, your body onto a formed board, jump in the river and go river surfing or sledging; add some abseiling and jumping off waterfalls and you've got canyoning. Prices for most trips begin around $125.

Frogz Have More Fun is sledging, and the boards are more bouyant than the river surfing. Operating out of both Queenstown and Wanaka, there is a choice of rivers, depending on your thrill level, age and interest in bouncing over rocks or whitewater. www.frogz.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-9130 or 0800-338-738.

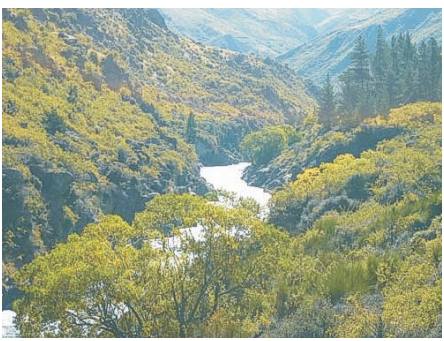
Serious Fun River Surfing sticks to the Kawarau River, but has more than one section at their disposal. Depending on river flow, the whitewater can be pretty intense. www.riversurfing.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-5262 or 0800-737-468.

Canyoning involves rocks, ropes and water and is not for the faint of heart, but is good for confidence-building. Try the waterslides, rock

pools, jumping and swimming with 12 Mile Delta, www.xiimile.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-3315 or 021-507-677, or Routeburn Canyoning Ltd., www.gycanyoning.co.nz, ☎ 03-441-4386.

On Foot

Queenstown and the surrounding area are a haven for trampers. Many of the walks are accessed by either Queenstown/Glenorchy or Te Anau – for information on the Routeburn and Hollyford tracks, see the Fiordland chapter, pages 418 ff.



The Greenstone and Caples tracks are linked by a pass over the McKeller saddle – one of the lowest passes of the major walks. The tracks go through valleys that were important access routes from Otago to the West Coast. They were used by Maori in search of pounamu and later by Europeans also on their way to the West Coast. The Greenstone and Caples tracks can be linked to the Routeburn, (the Greenstone is often used on its own as a link between the Routeburn and Glenorchy/Queenstown making up the Grand Travers) but on their own, make a reasonable four- or five-day tramp that's not too difficult and basically follows the paths of the two rivers. This route is especially popular early in the season when the other tracks are still closed due to snow. The track can be walked either clockwise or counter-clockwise, but my recommendation is clockwise. Leave your car at the holiday park in Glenorchy and take a boat ride across to the start of the track – the road in is long and unpaved; it can be impassable after a flood.

LOCAL WALKS

There are quite a few good walks around and at the head of Lake Wakatipu that are accessed from along the Glenorchy-Queenstown Road and from Glenorchy. The Twelve Mile Loop Track is a good three-hour loop that makes a good diversion from the action of town.

Another good walk that leaves right from town is along the Frankton Arm Walkway. It's an easy walk along the lakeshore, but it feels as if you're miles away. The Ben Lomond Track is a good all-day walk to the summit of Ben Lomond, but the six- to eight-hour round-trip can be cut by two hours if you take the gondola. The climb is demanding, but on a clear day you'll be rewarded. See DoC for brochures on all the walks around town (there are dozens).

TrackNet connects you with the different tracks and picks you up again at the end. Contact them if you are interested in doing the Milford, Routeburn, Kepler, Hollyford, Greenstone or Caples. They also rent gear and arrange for hut passes, self-guided walks, one-day trips and combination trips. www.greatwalksnz.com, ☎ 03-249-7777 or 0800-832-628.

Info&Track also provides services for independent walkers, including bookings, transport and gear rental. They service the Great Walks and others. www.infotrack.co.nz, 37 Shotover Street, ☎ 03-442-9708 fax 03-442-7038.

The Backpacker Express has transport options for the Routeburn, Greenstone, Caples, and Rees/Dart tracks. Book through the Glenorchy information center, www.glenorchyinfocentre.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9939.

On Bikes

Pick up a copy of Walk & Bike The Wakatipu, which lists about a dozen mountain bike tracks in the area, as well as additional walks. Also go into DoC and get a copy of *Mountain Bike Riding - Wakatipu*, which includes a topo map. My favorite ride in the area is from Arrowtown to Macetown, which goes up an old miners road (see section following on Arrowtown).

For a really fun time, sign up with Gravity Action and ride Skippers Canyon. The van transport is a real plus – no riding back out the canyon after you barrel down the old miner's pack track. You can combine your trip with bungy, rafting or a helicopter trip. A plus here is that you get the 4x4 ride into and out of Skippers. Trips take about 3½ hours and run two or three times daily. Prices begin at $99. You can also rent full- and front-suspension bikes from these guys. www.gravityaction.com, 37 Shotover Street, ☎ 03-441-1021.

Fat Tyre Adventures leads mountain-bike trips all around the Queenstown area, including some on private land. Prices begin at $75. www.fat-tyre.co.nz, ☎ 0800-328-897.

Vertigo Mountain Biking does guided trips and mountain bike rental. They have a special track coming down from the Skyline Gondola and also offer heli-biking and 4WD trips to the tops of hills. It's also a retail shop, so they can outfit you with gear if needed. Guided trips begin at $99. www.heli-adventures.co.nz, 14 Shotover Street, ☎ 03-442-8378.

Adventure Biking offers 4WD transport to Moke Lake, where you begin your guided mountain-bike ride. It's not just a downhill ride; there are river crossings and some climbs. Trips take about three hours and depart twice a day. For a longer option, these folks will take you on a two-day trip with a night camping in between. Prices begin at $79. www.houseofsafari.com, ☎ 0800-222-767

On Horses

Shotover Stables runs three short trips a day, longer rides by arrangement, ☎ 03-442-7486.

Moonlight Stables also has three set trips a day, as well as half- and full-day rides, on a large farm. $75 adults, $45 children. ☎ 03-442-1229.

One-hour, two-hour and all-day trips up the Rees Valley leave from High Country Horses, five km past Glenorchy. Prices begin at $40. www.high-country-horses.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9915.

On the Farm

A farm tour can be combined with the TSS Earnslaw Steamship trip to Walter Peak Station. www.realjourneys.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-4846 or 0800-656-503.

Deer Park Heights has tame and wild animals and began as an animal park in 1966. It's not a typical animal farm – the animals are not in

small zoo-like enclosures. The property is high up on Peninsula Road, above the Franklin Arm, just 20 minutes away from Queenstown, but it feels like another place altogether. It was used quite a bit in the filming of *Lord of the Rings*. www.thedeerpark.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-7699.

By 4x4

There are a couple of different 4x4 options around and the choice will depend on where you want to explore.

Skippers Canyon Heritage Tours take about four hours and, obviously, go to Skippers Canyon. From $95 adults, $50 children. skippers@queenstown-holiday.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-5949.

New Zealand Nomad Safaris has a variety of trips around the area, including Skippers Canyon, Macetown, Glenorchy and the Wakatipu Basin. They also offer a "learn to drive a 4WD" trip. From $110 adults, $60 children. www.nomadsafaris.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-6699 or 0800-688-222.

With Adrenaline

It seems you can't mention Queenstown without saying "bungy" in the same breath.

The Kawarau Bridge is the world's first bungy site (open since 1988) and is 43 meters (142 feet) above the water. It really is picturesque here, so at least stop by and watch (although to get a really good view, you'll have to fork over $5 and go through the bungy center). The Nevis Highwire is the highest, at 134 meters (440 feet), and it takes a ride on a 4WD road to reach it. The Ledge Bungy is 47 meters (154 feet) and the Ledge Skyswing are in town, at the gondola. www.ajhackett.com; the AJ Hackett office is at The Station, ☎ 03-442-7100 or 0800-286-495.

If the standard bungy isn't enough, you can bungy from a chair, hanging under a parachute, while being pulled around Lake Wakatipu by a

boat with Parabungy, www.parabungy.co.nz. ☎ 03-409-0712. Or you can opt for a Bungy Rocket where you are in a cage and shot skyward for 50 meters (160 feet) and then, well, what goes up and all that. ☎ 03-442-9894.

As if the bungy jump wasn't enough, now you can Canyon Swing. Be harnessed to a swing, step off a platform and drop like lead before swinging across the Shotover Canyon and being winched back to safety. I asked the owner what inspired such an idea and he said too much beer and hot sun.Prices start at $109. www.canyonswing.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-6990 or 0800-279-464.

On Trains

Kingston Flyer (C. Wiles)

The vintage steam train Kingston Flyer operates three times daily with round-trip service from Kingston to Fairlight, a mere 14 km (nine miles) away. The train came to life in 1878, following the discovery of gold and the need for transport of equipment, supplies, and livestock. At one time, the line ran from Dunedin to Kingston, and even connected with steamer service from Kingston to Queenstown. But, following the building and opening of roads in the area and improved transport, rail service was suspended in the mid-1950s. In action today are two AB Class Pacific locomotives, built between 1925 and 1927. Kingston is about 45 minutes from Queenstown on SH6. Other transport options to Kingston include mini-bus or catamaran. Contact the

Flyer for details. Round-trip fare is $30 adults, $10 children. www.kingstonflyer.co.nz, ☎ 03-248-8848 or 0800-435-937.

In the Air

SCENIC FLIGHTS

A menu of scenic flights is available from Air Wakatipu, including options to Milford Sound, Mt. Cook, and local sites. If you prefer, you can opt for an aerobatic flight. Prices begin at $75. www.flying.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-3148.

Milford Sound Scenic Flight over Queenstown

For a performance flight, go in a Pitts Special with Actionflite Limited. Roll, climb, dive, it's all there. From $215. www.actionflite.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-4131 or 0800-360-264.

The Helicopter Line has scenic trips to the glaciers. From $180. www.helicopter.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-3034.

Milford Sound Scenic Flights does fly/cruise/fly packages, as well as other scenic flights, bus and cruise options. From $275. www.milfordflights.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-3065.

Air Fiordland flies from both Queenstown and Te Anau and offers scenic flights throughout the area. From $275. www.airfiordland.com, ☎ 03-442-3404 or 0800-103-404.

For something a bit more mellow, try a three-hour trip with Sunrise Balloons. Flight time is about an hour and trips include a champagne breakfast. $295 adults, $195 children. www.ballooningnz.com ☎ 03-442-0781 or 025-200-0699.

SKYDIVING

I really like their marketing slogan – "NZONE, Embrace the Fear." Jumps from 9,000, 12,000 and 15,000 feet. Go on, do it! Do it once. From $245. www.nzone.biz, ☎ 03-442-5867.

Vertical Descent has tandem skydive trips leaving from Glenorchy. Trips can be arranged in combo with a canyoning trip. From $245. verticaldescent@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-409-0363 or 03-409-0364.

PARA-STUFF

You can go tandem or single parasailing with Paraflights NZ, just off the main jetty in town. $65 tandem/$75 single. www.parasail.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-8507 or 025-226-2613.

You've got quite a few choices to go paragliding and hang-gliding. Prices for most trips begin around $165. Tandem paragliding is available at Coronet Peak through Flight Park Tandems Ltd., www.tandemparaliding.com, ☎ 0800-467-325. Elevation Paragliding School has tandem rides and solo lessons at Coronet Peak, www.elevation.co.nz, ☎ 0800-359-444. Tandem Paragliding also operates from Coronet Peak, www.tandemparagliding.com, ☎ 0800-759-688. Extreme Air is also at Coronet Peak and offers tandem hang-gliding and paragliding as well as lessons, ☎ 027-475-0524 or 0800-727-245. Antigravity launches tandem hang-gliding trips from Coronet Peak or other sites, depending on conditions, www.antigravity.co.nz, ☎ 03-441-8898. Likewise, Sky Trek Tandem Hang Gliding uses Coronet and other spots, ☎ 03-442-6311 or 025-331-741. Tandem Pargliding Queenstown lifts off from the Skyline Gondola site, www.paragliding.net.nz, ☎ 03-441-8581 or 0800-759-688.

◆ Sightseeing

Skyline Gondola base terminal

On a clear day (or night) nothing beats a trip up the Skyline Gondola for views of the city, lake and mountains. The top is 790 meters (2,500 feet) above sea level and, honestly, the view is incredible. The restaurant is open for lunch and dinner buffets and you can make a pig of yourself while gazing out the floor-to-ceiling windows. I did. The gondola operates from 9 am daily. There is also a movie theater that shows *Kiwi Magic*, a 30-minute film of New Zealand landscape and

sites. There are a few thrills, too, like The Ledge Bungy, the Skyline Luge and the Tandem Parapente. Even if you're not interested in a big dinner or doing the luge or bungy, ride the gondola up and have a drink in the bar. The views are great. www.skyline.co.nz, ☎ 03-441-0101

An icon on the water is the TSS *Earnslaw Steamship*. The boat leaves three or four times a day, depending on season, and heads to Walter Peak High Country Farm. There you can either disembark for a farm tour, horseback ride, or BBQ, or just return directly to Queenstown. It's an hour and 35 minutes for the round-trip, three hours 35 minutes if you stay on the station for an activity. From $36 adults, $15 children. www.realjourneys.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-4846 or 0800-656-503.

◆ Where to Stay

Millbrook Resort is between Queenstown and Arrowtown and, in addition to the sprawling golf course and fitness spa, has a range of accommodation, from cottages with bath and kitchen to rooms in the hotel villas. It's all very beautiful. www.millbrook.co.nz, Malaghans Road, ☎ 03-441-7000, fax 03-441-7007 ($$$$).

The Novotel Gardens Queenstown is right in the center of town and has easy access to just about everything. Corner Earl and Marine Parade, ☎ 03-442-7750 ($$$-$$$$).

Blue Peaks Lodge and Blue Peaks Apartments are close to town and have a range of options to chose from – some motel units have kitchens, some don't. The apartments are upmarket and spacious. www.bluepeaks.co.nz, corner Stanley and Sydney Streets, ☎ 03-442-9224 or 0800-162-222, fax 03-442-6847 ($$-$$$$).

Reserve early if you want to stay at Butterfli Lodge. It's a small, popular place that feels homey. No big dorm rooms here. www.butterfli.co.nz, 62 Thompson Street, ☎ 03-442-6367 ($).

Another good backpacker hostel choice is Bumbles. It's a medium-sized place with good facilities and right across from Lake Wakatipu. 2 Brunswick Street, ☎ 03-442-6298 ($).

Queenstown Top 10 Creeksyde Holiday Park has the full range of accommodation options and is in a tree-lined area. It's very comfortable and the hosts are lovely. More notably, though, Creeksyde is the

world's first holiday park to be certified Green Globe 21, which is a high standard set by the United Nations for sustainable development. www.camp.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9447 or 0800-786-222, fax 03-442-6621 ($-$$$).

In Glenorchy

Glenorchy, at the head of Lake Wakatipu, is a beautiful little town and many of the fabulous walks and tramps start here so it's a great base for exploring the mountains. The town is surrounded by fabulous scenery and sits at the base of the Forbes and Humbolt Mountains and the Rees and Dart Rivers end their flows here. It's just 50 km (30 miles) from Queenstown.

Top of the heap for cool spot and history would definitely be Kinlock Lodge, which was built in 1868. It's around the head of the lake from Glenorchy and only a five-minute boat ride. There are bunk rooms and lodge rooms and a very good restaurant. www.kinlochlodge.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-4900, fax 03-442-992 ($-$$$$).

Glen Roydon Lodge definitely has that mountain-lodge feel. Facilities include a big lounge, restaurant, bar, shop. www.glenroydon.com, ☎/fax 03-442-9968 ($$-$$$).

The Glenorchy Hotel is just a regular Kiwi hotel. Some rooms share facilities, some have en-suite bathroom and there is a bar and restaurant. www.glenorchynz.com, ☎ 03-442-9902 or 0800-453-667, fax 03-442-9912 ($-$$).

Glenorchy Holiday Park and Backpacker's has all the usual holiday-park options and a small store. www.glenorchyinfocentre.co.nz, Oban Street, ☎ 03-442-9939, fax 03-442-9940 ($).

◆ Where to Eat

Some of my favorites are:

Roaring Megs was in an old house that had been moved from Skippers Canyon. Then a new building was erected on the grounds, so now this old-time restaurant is in a brand-new facility, but the food is still fabulous. If you've been waiting to have rack of lamb, do it here. Reserve for dinner. 53 Shotover Street, ☎ 03-442-9676 ($$$).

The Cow is a must for fantastic pizza. Cow Lane, ☎ 03-442-8588 ($-$$).

The Vudu Café has fabulous chocolate and berry cake and other yummy baked breakfast goodies. They also have very reasonably priced wraps and veggie and pasta dishes for dinner. 28 Beach Street, ☎ 03-442-5357 ($-$$).

The Bathhouse is open for breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea; then it reopens for dinner. I've never had dinner here, but have had lunch and it was very good. It's a bit more formal than some spots. Marine Parade, ☎ 03-442-5625 ($$$).

Choose Wai Waterfront Restaurant for a proper dinner of great food and good wine. It's especially good when someone else is paying. It's one of my favorite places for just sitting outside with some wine. Steamer Wharf, ☎ 03-442-5969 ($$$).

Arrowtown

When gold was found in the Arrow River in 1862, the town that would become Arrowtown sprang to life. At its peak, Arrowtown was home to 7,000 – today there are only 1,200 permanent residents (but the number swells to about 7,000 in the summer). One of the richest rivers for size, the Arrow was mined by gold seekers from around the world, including quite a strong Chinese contingent. The Chinese miners were subject to prejudice and segregation (presumably, the European miners forgot that they, too, were recent immigrants). At the end of Bush Creek, you can see a re-created example of a typical Chinese mining settlement; for more information on the Chinese gold miners throughout Otago, see the Lakes District Museum in Arrowtown (below), or the Otago Settlers Museum in Dunedin (page 347).

Today, Arrowtown is a lovely, touristy spot that's a quiet base to use while exploring more of the region. The shops sell higher-end tourist treats, including wool and sheepskin products. It's nicest to wander

around town after the tour buses have left – plan to stay a night to enjoy this gold-mining village at its best.

Macetown, 16 km (10 miles) up the Arrow River, is a ghost town from mining days. You'll find a few old buildings (some restored) made of wood and brick, but better still is that you don't find much – it's close to so much activity, but a quiet spot for a day's outing. The road follows the old miners' track and is definitely for 4X4s, or a long walk. My favorite mountain bike ride in this area is on this track from Arrowtown to Macetown. Depending on the river flow, you'll be crossing it at least 30 times each way – don't even think about keeping your feet dry! My toes were little ice cubes after this ride, but it was a great time. And if you're weak on river crossings, this trip will fix the problem.

Visitor information services are handled at the Lakes District Museum and Gallery, which also houses some interesting displays on the town's (and region's) history. www.museumqueenstown.com, 49 Buckingham Street, ☎ 03-442-1824.

◆ Where to Stay

The units at Shades of Arrowtown are extremely clean and tidy, comfortable and spacious, yet very reasonably priced. Various arrangements of beds and cooking facilities, gas BBQ, large lawn/garden area. There is also a house with bath and kitchen. www.shadesofarrowtown.co.nz, corner of Buckingham and Merioneth Streets, ☎/fax 03-442-1613 ($$-$$$).

Settlers Cottage Motel has studio and one- and two-bedroom units, with a certain "old-time charm." www.arrowtown.co.nz/settlers, 22 Hertford Street, ☎ 03-442-1734 or 0800-803-801, fax 03-442-1936 ($$-$$$).

Riverdown Guesthouse is a small house with just four rooms (bunk, double and twin), a regular cottage-house kind of kitchen and lounge, a gorgeous garden and BBQ area – impeccably clean. The family is as nice and friendly as can be and two of the rooms were brand new in 2004 (with en-suite bathrooms), while the others are just a bit older. A perfect place to stay whether you're on a budget or not. Open summer only. 7 Bedford Street, ☎ 03-409-8499 ($).

Poplar Lodge is a backpacker hostel in a sprawling home, located in a residential neighborhood, with plenty of space to spread out. Small dorms, twins, and doubles, washing facilities, lots of garden space. Extremely clean and there's real coffee. www.poplarlodge.co.nz, 41 Merioneth Street, ☎ 03-442-1466 fax 03-442-1459 ($).

Arrowtown Holiday Park is a quick walk from town and has cabins and tourist apartments, tent and power sites. Suffolk Street. ☎ 03-442-1876 ($).

◆ Where to Eat

Saffron is the top restaurant. The food is scrumptious and the surroundings are lovely. I ate here when they first opened and have never looked back. 18 Buckingham Street ($$-$$$).

The Stable Café and Restaurant offers a wide range of superb food, from pizza and light meals to full and hearty giant steaks and fish. It's in a gorgeous building of wood and stone on 28 Buckingham Street ($$-$$$).

Another fine choice is The Postmasters House, with lots of flavors and full lunch and dinner menu. Set in a darling spot. 54 Buckingham ($$-$$$).

Café Mondo has good coffee, tasty cakes and yummy wraps. Good outdoor seating, too. Ballarat Arcade ($).

The Arrowtown Bakery is famous for its savoury pies, but makes some other tasty treats, too. Ballarat Arcade ($).

Wanaka

Naming Wanaka as one of my favorite vacation destinations makes me like just about everyone else in New Zealand. Definitely the laid-back cousin to big and busy Queenstown, Wanaka is a four-season destination with fabulous walks, great mountain biking, a wide range of water activities and more than one way to take to the air. Wanaka sits at the base of the Crown Range and at the very edge of the Southern Alps. Hills and mountains jut out of the ground and reach to the sky, gently changing from rounded, tame hillsides to dramatic craggy peaks laden with glacial ice. This is one of the most spectacular places in all of New Zealand to take a scenic flight.

Did you know? *At 277 meters (900 feet) above sea level, Lake Wanaka is the fourth-largest lake in New Zealand and has 175 km (108 miles) of shoreline. At its deepest, the lake is 311 meters (1,010 feet). It is the source of the Clutha River that winds its way to Lake Dunstan. The Clutha River is New Zealand's largest-volume river.*

Lake Wanaka (www.visitsouthisland.co.nz)

Wanaka (Oanaka) was home to the ancient Maori, attracted to the same things that later brought the Europeans – natural resources and pleasant weather. The lake provided food and fiber, the land was rich in plant and bird life. Flightless moas were hunted, as were pigeons, wekas and kakapos. The trading routes for pounamu (greenstone) converged in Wanaka. Europeans arrived and settled the area in the 1850s, first in Albert Town along the Clutha River and, 20 years later, in Wanaka, which the Europeans named Pembroke, after a British colonial secretary. (The name Wanaka was reinstated in 1940.) Farming was the premier activity until the 1860s, when Pembroke served as the service center for the gold-mining settlements during the Otago gold rush. When the first hotel (on the site of the Wanaka Hotel) was built in 1867, Wanaka's destiny as a tourist destination was set.

Modern Wanaka sprang to life in the late 1960s when the local ski hills were first developed as club fields and later, as the fields became more commercialized in the 1970s, the town really began to grow. The year-round permanent population is only 2,000 – but over the Christmas holiday that number swells to 25,000.

Lake Hawea, the most northern of the southern glacial lakes, is just 15 minutes north. It is the quieter sister and, if travel writing were more lucrative and I had money to invest, I would buy property here.

◆ Getting Here

By Air

The Wanaka airport has domestic service via Air New Zealand. The airport is about 10 minutes out of town on SH6. You can also fly to Queenstown and drive 40 miles/67 km to Wanaka.

By Car

From the West Coast, SH6 travels along the Haast River and exits the Southern Alps at Makarora. The terrain changes dramatically as you leave the rain forest and sidle along the northeast shores of Lake Wanaka and the southeastern edge of Lake Hawea. From Makarora, it's only 60 km (36 miles), but allow yourself a good 45 minutes to an hour. One of the most beautiful drives is between Wanaka and Queenstown via the Crown Range. It's only been a few years that the road was completely paved, making the 67 km (40 miles) a relatively painless and very rewarding drive. Prior to the paving of the road, visitors from Queenstown more often than not came to Wanaka via Cromwell and SH6. From Cromwell to Wanaka, it's about 42 km (26 miles). To Dunedin, figure about four or five hours and from Omarama, it's a bit over an hour.

By Bus

InterCity and Atomic Shuttles both provide regular service to Wanaka. InterCity stops at the Paper Place, 84 Ardmore Street, and Atomic goes to United Travel, 99 Ardmore Street.

◆ Information Sources

Take a look at www.lakewanaka.co.nz and, for information on Lake Hawea, www.atnow.net.

The very helpful Wanaka Visitor Centre can be contacted at holiday@lakewanaka.co.nz, on the Lakefront, ☎ 03-443-1233, fax 03-443-1290.

The well-supplied DoC office is the Mount Aspiring National Park Visitor Center and is at the corner of Ardmore Street and Ballantyne Road, ☎ 03-443-7760, fax 03-443-8777.

Lake Hawea

Mt. Aspiring National Park is the third-largest in New Zealand. It has it all – glaciers and snow fields, meadows and gorges. At the end of the Southern Alps, it is part of Te Waipounamu World Heritage Area. Mt. Aspiring (3,027 meters/9,828 feet) is the tallest peak in the park and the tallest peak in New Zealand outside of the Aoraki/Mt. Cook region. The park is home to a number of New Zealand birds.

◆ Adventures

On the Water

Lakeland Adventures

On a hot summer day after a walk or a bike ride, you're going to want to get in the water. The Wanaka lakefront is a popular spot for picnics and swimming and the coastal walks give plenty of opportunity for beach splashing, but favorite swimming holes include Dublin and Glendhu Bays. Keep in mind, Lake Wanaka is a cold lake – rarely getting above 15°C (60°F) – but in the shallow bays like Dublin and Glendhu the top layer does warm up from the sun.

If you want to cruise Lake Wanaka (on your own or skippered) in a pontoon boat, call Bluewater Cruises. Take a picnic, a fishing rod and a good book; spend a few hours or the day. Daily cruises are also available, and leave at 10:30 am and 4 pm. $55 adults, $20 children. Self-drive boats start at $90 per hour, skippered ones at $120. bluewatercruises@wave.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-5452 or 021-445-458.

Jet-boat around Lake Wanaka and then head up the Clutha River with Lakeland Adventures at $70 for adults, $35 children. Other, slower-paced scenic cruises around the lake include trips to

Stevensons Island and Mou Waho; prices begin at $50 adults for a scenic trip, $25 children. Island trips begin at $70/$35. Kayaks, dinghy, aqua bike and fishing rods are available for rent. www.lakelandadventures.co.nz, The Log Cabin, ☎ 03-443-7495or 027-437-0271, fax 03-443-1323.

Abseiling instruction and getting extremely wet is all a part of canyoning with Deep Canyon, making it one of the top activities in Wanaka. This is the original canyoning company of New Zealand and trips go into the Matukituki Valley with lots of water chutes, waterfalls and floats. Some trips require prior experience, but there's something for everyone as long as you've got a sense of adventure. Prices begin at $195. www.deepcanyon.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-443-7922.

If you've wanted to try river kayaking, Alpine Kayak Guides is a really good choice. River options depend on flow and experience, but include the Clutha, Hawea, Makarora and Matukituki. Trips range from three to six hours, and instructional courses, from a three-day beginner class to rolling clinics, are also available. Prices begin at $65 per person. www.alpinekayaks.co.nz, located in Luggate, about 12 km (seven miles) from Wanaka, ☎ 03-443-9023 or 025-382-475.

FISHING

In addition to lakes Wanaka and Hawea, rivers in the area that are fished include the Clutha, Hawea, Matukituki, Makarora and Hunter. The area is known for rainbow and brown trout and landlocked salmon. Choice fishing sites are Timaru Creek early in the season (November to December) and Deans Bank on the Clutha River in Albert Town.

Tip: *Keep in mind that, as with anywhere else in New Zealand, you must have a fishing license.*

Fishing Guides

The top three local choices for guides are:

Gerald and Sue Telford Fishing and Hunting Services, www.flyfishhunt.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-443-9257.

Ian Cole, iancole@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-7870 or 025-208-0188, fax 03-443-7853.

Mark Buckingham, www.southernlakesfishing.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-9121 or 025-852-150.

On Foot

Wanaka is a great base for some of the most spectacular day-walks around. Visit the DoC office and pick up copies of *Wanaka Walks and Trails*, *Matukituki Valley Tracks* and *Haast Pass Highway: Short Walks*.

WANAKA WALKS

Mount Roy Track is lovingly called Hero Mountain by the locals, who are constantly trying to beat each other to the top. If you want to be a hero, by all means go for it (the current record is about 50 minutes to the top; the normal person will take a little over three hours). It's a straight-up grind to the top and at the summit you'll be rewarded with fabulous views of the lake, Mt. Aspiring and the surrounding mountains. Respect that this walk is on private land and may be closed during lambing season.

Eely Point Walk is best done in the afternoon and, at 20 minutes of flat, it's at the other end of the exertion spectrum. It's a gentle amble with lovely seating along the way – a favorite of the locals for walking the dog and good for gawking at multi-million dollar homes as well. Keep your ears and eyes open for mountain bikes.

Beacon Point Walk goes out to Beacon Point and, by adding on a bit of road, you can tie it in with Eely Point. It's another easy walk (30 minutes) that's also open to mountain bikes and dogs.

Waterfall Creek Walk is on the west side of the lake and best done in the morning. It's misnamed – there's no waterfall. It's an easy walk with seats for "over 40s" along the way and takes about an hour in each direction.

Lake Outlet Track is another locals' track and, because it's sheltered, is highly recommended in windy conditions. It's also a good choice if the weather's not clear – the river gives you some things to look at when the mountains are obscured.

MATUKITUKI VALLEY WALKS

If you're looking for something farther out, try the walks in the Matukituki Valley. Head out of Wanaka toward Glendhu Bay and then continue on the road up to and past Aspiring Station. Be forewarned – the road is gravel and there are fords to cross – check with your rental car company to make sure you're covered. It's imperative that, after a rain, you check with DoC or your accommodation provider to make sure the road is passable (or advisable). The fords are shallow and firm, but after a good rain, that can change! Even if you're not going to do any long walks, this is a spectacular drive, with waterfalls, mountains and lake views. It's about 50 minutes from Wanaka township to the Raspberry Creek car park. Multi-day walks from the Matukituki Valley are for experienced trampers. Quite a few mountaineering routes leave from here, as well. Mt. Aspiring is quite like the Matterhorn, and is the highest mountain in New Zealand outside of Mt. Cook National Park.

Rob Roy Glacier walk is one of the must-do activities in Wanaka. It's three or four hours round-trip and, while not recommended after heavy rain, is filled with great scenery – trees, bushline, glaciers, rocks, cliffs, you name it! Take a picnic and head up for the day.

The walk to the Aspiring Hut is the other popular day-walk from Matukituki Valley – four or five hours round-trip. This is a fine picnic walk and you'll have great views of Mt. Aspiring. If you're fit and have good weather, continue on (follow the signs) to the pylon above the hut – you'll get the best views that you could hope for. This will add a couple of hours in the valley and then a climb but, if you have time, daylight and energy, go for it.

One of my all-time favorite walks in New Zealand is up to Brewster Hut. It's a great one-day up, stay the night and then back down. You get above the tree line and onto a good open ridge – it can get really windy up here, so dress accordingly. You can do this as a day-walk and just have lunch at the top, but I really enjoyed staying in the four-bunk hut (and getting snowed in).

The Siberia Experience is a great package. It starts with a 25-minute breathtaking flight from Makarora to the Siberia Valley. Along the way, you'll see incredible glaciers, tarns, hanging valleys and peaks of the Southern Alps. After landing in the valley, follow the river on a three-hour walk through beech forest and finally be picked up by jetboat for a 30-minute trip back to Makarora. For value, this is one of the best things going – just the scenic flight is worth the money and the rest is free! Also contact Southern Alps for interesting flight/tramping packages into the mountains. There are countless multiday walks and options. $225 per person. www.siberiaexperience.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-8666 or 0800-345-666.

GUIDED OPTIONS

Another good value is a day spent tramping with Iris Abaeherli. You'll drive by 4WD to some of the best walking around – Mt. Aspiring Hut, Rob Roy Glacier, or Glacier Burn, for example – and she'll provide good interpretation of the flora and fauna and local area. For a tougher tramp, she'll take you up Mt. Brewster or to Mt. Cook. Options are just about endless. If you're short on time, ask about a half-day trip. Prices for a full day begin at $185 for one person, $115 per person for two, $90 per person for three and $80 per person for four. Iris' husband, Gary Dickson, is a mountain guide who offers mountaineering on some of the toughest real estate around. He also runs mountaineering instruction for all levels. In the winter, this duo leads ski touring, ski mountaineering and avalanche courses. www.alpinismski.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-443-6593.

Wild Walks Ltd. leads two- to eight-day trips into Mt. Aspiring National Park and beyond. Contact them for options you never dreamt of. www.wildwalks.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-4476.

TRANSPORT FOR WALKERS

Mount Aspiring Express runs shuttle service to and from Raspberry Creek – the access spot for Matukituki Valley walks and tramps. Prices begin at $25 one-way. www.adventure.net.nz, ☎/fax 03-443-8422.

Alpine Coachlines operates transport from Wanaka to the more popular hiking areas up the Matukituki Valley, like Mt. Roy, Rob Roy Glacier, Aspiring Hut, and so on. www.good-sports.co.nz, 17 Dunmore Street, ☎ 03-443-7966 or 0800-754-926.

In the Air

High on my list of must-do activities in all of New Zealand is a ride with Wanaka Helicopters. Scenic flights range from 20 minutes to four hours and can be combined with jet-boating, biking, skiing or hiking. The mountains around Wanaka are beautiful from the ground, but absolutely incredible from the air – and there is no way a fixed-wing flight can offer you the same wow factor as a helicopter. Take the flight up to the ice and be amazed at Mt. Aspiring. Other trips go to Milford Sound, Mt. Cook or wherever you want. From $145. www.heliflights.co.nz, Wanaka Airport, ☎ 03-443-1085, fax 03-443-1086.

Aspiring Air Scenic Flights has a full menu of flights. www.nzflights.com, Wanaka Airport, ☎ 03-443-7943 or 0800-100-943, fax 03-443-8949.

If the natural beauty of the area isn't enough, you can thrill yourself at JetFlights Wanaka on board an L 39 Albatros. www.jetflights.co.nz, ☎ 0800-538-354 or 021-325-318.

Wanaka Paragliding offers three options: Eco-flying (walk up and fly down), Big Mountain (drive up and fly down), and Huge Vertical (drive and chairlift up and fly down). From $90. Transport available from Wanaka. www.wanakaparagliding.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-9193 or 021-292-7036.

Lucky Montana's Flying Circus has both paragliding in the mountains and parasailing at the beachfront. ☎ 0800-247-287.

Tandem Skydive Wanaka Limited lets you choose from 9,000, 12,000 or 15,000 feet. Video and still photography of your jump is available. www.skydivenz.com, Wanaka Airport, ☎ 03-443-7207 or 027-479-6877.

Warbirds Over Wanaka

Every second year (the last one was in 2006) over Easter weekend, this international air show, with a wide variety of vintage and unusual planes. If you are interested in the show, make sure you reserve accommodation as far in advance as possible. If you are not interested in the show, don't even consider being in Wanaka at that time! www.warbirdsoverwanaka.com.

On Bikes

Wanaka is ripe with mountain bike tracks – pick up a copy of *Lake Wanaka Cycling Map* and hit the road! It lists over 45 rides. Many of them are in The Plantation forest park and vary in difficulty from easy to very technical. It's a great place to ride; you can link tracks together and be out there all day. There are also quite a few short, technical rides along the edge of the Clutha River. On the other side of the lake, an easy ride is along the Lakeside and Millennium Tracks – but be careful of walkers.

Rental bikes are available at the following locations:

Lakeland Adventures, in The Log Cabin, on the waterfront, ☎ 03-443-7495.

Mountain Bikes Unlimited, 99 Ardmore Street, ☎ 03-443-7882.

Mountain Bike Wanaka leads three-hour tours for $75, including bike rental. Easy to tough; if you want to do gnarly stuff, let them know. mountainbike_wanaka@hotmail.com, ☎ 03-443-7739 or 025-617-4416.

Alpine & Heli Mountain Biking has some great rides on Treble Cone, Mt. Pisa, and other high tracks accessed by 4WD. Depending on the ride, you can have over 20 km (12 miles) of downhill. www.mountainbiking.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-8943 or 025-277-3358.

On Horses

Backcountry Saddle is by the Cardrona Hotel and takes trips into the high country, ranging from two hours to overnight. These are not yee-ha rides – Debs is a serious horsewoman. Multi-day horse treks to huts are also available by arrangement. Prices begin at $55 adults, $35 children. backcountry.saddle.expeditions@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-8151, fax 03-443-1712.

Lake Hawea Horse Trekking Ltd. has two-hour, half-day and full-day options along the lake and on the family sheep station. All levels of riders are accommodated. Prices begin at $65 adults, $55 children. kiarastables@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-8541 or 027-255-0985, fax 03-443-8542.

4x4

At Criffel Peak Safaris you can ride a quad bike along old pack trails through gold-rush areas, and on high-country farmland. Trips last from two to three hours. www.criffelpeaksafaris.com, Cardrona Road, SH89, a few minutes before Cardrona. ☎ 03-443-1711 or 0800-102-122.

With Testosterone

Ever wish you could ride in a monster truck? Here's your chance, and, so far, the only place in the world where you can. You can also ride in the world's biggest school bus and crush cars as you go – or even opt to drive a monster truck yourself. Open daily, 10 am to 5:30 pm. Monster Mountain, www.monstertrucks.co.nz, SH89, over the Cardrona Range (just before the Cardrona Hotel), ☎ 03-443-6363 or 021-528-133.

In Beer & Wine

Wanaka Beerworks offers tours at 2 pm daily and tastings of Cardrona Gold, Brewski and Tall Black from 9:30 am to 6 pm. Food is also available. Located at the Wanaka Transport Museum, SH6, ☎ 03-443-1865.

Rippon Vineyard is one of the most photographed vineyards in the world, and with good reason. Sitting on the edge of Lake Wanaka, it is a beautiful site – and the wines are just as good as the views. Stop in for a tasting and a picnic; enjoy the lakefront location and quiet, laid-back elegance. It's a lovely spot. Rippon is also the founding site of GolfCross, where you use oval, not round, balls and aim for goals, not holes. Every second year, Rippon hosts Rippon Music Festival, an open-air contemporary music festival. The cellar door (tasting room) is open from 11 am to 5 pm during the summer (December to April), by appointment only during May and June; and from 1:30 to 4:30, July to November. www.rippon.co.nz and www.golfcross.com, five minutes from Wanaka on the Mt. Aspiring Road, ☎ 03-443-8084.

◆ Sightseeing

Wanaka Sightseeing has half- and full-day guided trips around the area including wine touring, art, mountains,

and just about everything else, including Lord of the Rings tours. www.wanakasightseeing.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-1855.

Lose yourself (or any misbehaving traveling companions) at Stuart Landsborough's Puzzling World. In addition to the maze, there's an illusion house, lots of holographs, goofy staircases and puzzles to tease your brain. www.puzzlingworld.com, five minutes west of Wanaka on the Main Highway, ☎ 03-443-7489.

New Zealand Fighter Pilots Museum is dedicated to airplanes, pilots and crews. There are stories, photographs and exhibits as well as flight simulation – fly against the computer or up to six other players. Open daily, 9 am to 4 pm, extended summer hours. www.nzfpm.co.nz, at the Wanaka Airport, ☎ 03-443-7010 or 0800-927-247.

Tip: *Do not miss a night at Paradiso Cinema café bar. They show two or three different movies each day, which range from first-run to special showings. The food in the café is tasty and fresh and freshly baked cookies come out of the oven in time for intermission. Not to mention the popcorn and homemade ice cream. The seats aren't your usual theater seats – they range from recycled couches and recliners to seats in a VW bug. 1 Ardmore Street, ☎ 03-443-1505.*

◆ Where to Stay

There are lots of nice places to stay in Wanaka, but Te Wanaka Lodge is my favorite. Andy and Graeme wanted to create accommodation that was like a ski lodge – cozy and comfortable and run by people who get out and do the stuff you want to try. There are 13 rooms, two guest lounges, a large eat-in kitchen (a full breakfast is provided) and a don't-miss spa in the garden. It's right in town and I can't say enough. www.tewanaka.co.nz, 23 Brownston Street, ☎ 03-443-9224, fax 03-443-9246 ($$$-$$$$).

Parklands Lodge is a custom-built B&B just outside of town on the way to the airport. It's very comfortable, the hosts are delightful and the gardens are beautiful. All the rooms open to the patio and lawn areas and there is a large swimming pool and a spa pool. www.parklandswanaka.co.nz, Ballantyne Road, ☎ 03-443-7305 or 021-955-160, fax 03-443-7345 ($$$-$$$$).

There are quite a few motels to chose from and ones to try include:

Manuka Crescent Motel with 10 units and a swimming pool. www.manukacrescentmotel.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-7773 or 0800-626-852, fax 03-443-443-9066 ($$-$$$); Alpine Motel, cheap and cheerful, next to the cinema and very close to town, www.alpinemotels.co.nz, 7 Ardmore Street ☎ 03-443-7950 or 0800-822-284, fax 03-443-9031 ($$-$$$); Archway Motel, with 15 units, a BBQ area and close to town, but not on the main drag. www.archwaymotels.co.nz, 64 Hedditch Street, ☎ 03-443-7698 or 0800-427-249, fax 03-443-8642 ($$-$$$); and Fairway Motel, with studios, one- and two-bedroom units and one backpackers room with bunks. www.fairwaylodgemotel.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-7285 or 0800-324-792, fax 03-443-9178 ($$-$$$).

The Purple Cow is a comfortable and large backpacker hostel with twins, doubles and dorms. It's a very pleasant place to stay and a quick walk to the lake. www.purplecow.co.nz, 94 Brownstone Street, ☎ 03-443-1880 or 0800-772-277, fax 03-443-1870 ($).

The Wanaka YHA is a small and quiet spot just a short walk from town. Very friendly and relaxed. yha.wanaka@yha.org.nz, 181 Upton Street, ☎/fax 03-443-7405 ($).

The Wanaka Bakpaka can be forgiven its cutesy name because it has great views, great facilities and is a friendly, relaxed place to stay. There are single, twin, double and shared-bath rooms and you can rent bikes, kayaks and canoes. wanaka.bakpaka@xtra.co.nz, 117 Lakeside Road, ☎ 03-443-7837 ($).

The Lake Wanaka Pleasant Lodge Top 10 Holiday Park has motel rooms, cabins, units with bath and kitchen, power and tent sites and is just a couple of minutes drive from Wanaka. Swimming pool, great views, clean facilities. www.nzsouth.co.nz/pleasantlodge, on the Mt. Aspiring Road, ☎ 03-443-7360 or 0508-926-252, fax 03-443-7354 ($-$$).

◆ Where to Eat

My favorite café is Kai Whakapai. They have the best coffee and light meals in town. Plus, their corner location is perfect for people-watching. Corner of Ardmore and Helwick ($-$$).

The second-best café is Relishes – it is outstandingly consistent and you can BYO, so take that bottle of wine you bought on your wine-

tasting outing. This is probably the most popular restaurant in town. 99 Ardomore, ☎ 03-443-9018 ($$).

The romantic restaurant of choice is Ambrosia. Great views to go along with the food. 76 Golf Course Road, ☎ 443-1255 ($$-$$$).

For a bustling, modern restaurant, go to Missy's Kitchen for lunch or dinner. It's a relaxed spot with great food – just stop in for a snack if you don't want a whole meal. 80 Ardmore Street, ☎ 03-443-5099 ($$-$$$).

The White House is the best choice for vegetarians. Menu selection is unique and trendy. All the wines are available by the glass. Corner of Dunmore and Dungarvon Streets, ☎ 03-443-9595 ($$-$$$).

Central Otago

You can't go farther inland than Central Otago. In a country of maritime influences, Central Otago offers a continental climate – dry, hot summers, long autumns and cold winters. Central is the world's southernmost grape-growing area and is also home to merinos, hearty sheep that produce the finest and most sought-after wool in challenging conditions.

The first gold in Otago was found in 1861 in the Lindis River; that was followed by the discovery in Gabriels Gully, just outside of Lawrence, in May 1861. Within two months, 150 men were working Gabriels Gully; in four months there were 6,000. Gold mining shaped Central Otago. Small towns sprang up, bringing with them the raucous lifestyle previously known to the rush sites of California and Australia.

Pick up a copy of Otago Goldfields Heritage Trail*, outlining the gold sites around the region. It includes a useful map for planning a driving tour to see the sites.*

◆ Adventures

On Bikes

Around Alexandra, you'll find some of the best mountain biking in New Zealand. The ride to Clyde is suitable for beginners and families. The Central Otago Rail Trail (described below) is also good for most riders. But if you venture just a little farther out, your skill and daring will be tested – consider exploring the Old Man Range and the Dunstan Mountains,

or riding the Manorburn/Poolburn Curcuit, or from Nevis to Carrickton. This is one place where you'll want to get some local knowledge before setting out. See Kayak and Outdoor, 21 Shannon Street, ☎ 03-448-8149 or Henderson Cycle, 88 Centennial, ☎ 03-448-8917, for information.

The 151-km (94-mile) Central Otago Rail Trail runs from Clyde to Middlemarch and takes in some of the most lovely country around. The trail is also open to walkers. It crosses 68 bridges and can be ridden in either direction, in full or in part; there is lodging along the way. You can combine a bike ride with the train through the Taieri Gorge. For more information, take a look at www.otagocentralrailtrail.co.nz. Tours and arrangements can be made through any of the information centers, or e-tours, www.inmark.co.nz/e-tours, ☎ 03-476-1960, and Kayak & Outdoor, www.kayakandoutdoor.co.nz, ☎ 03-448-8149.

With Wine

Central is the youngest grape-growing region in New Zealand, with the oldest vines just celebrating their 20th birthdays. Two-thirds of the plantings are Pinot Noir, but there's also Pinot Gris, Chardonnay, Riesling and a few other varieties.

The Grape Escape offers tours around wineries from Alexandra to Cromwell and Banockburn. ☎/fax 03-449-2696 or 021-449-269.

Daily tours from Queenstown are led by Central Otago Wine Trails. ☎ 03-442-0246.

An Essential Wine Adventure has an auditorium with a wine film and offers tasting, a restaurant, a café, and merchandise from Central Otago wineries and food producers. Open daily, 9 am to 8 pm. www.wineadventure.co.nz, corner of Sandflat Road and SH6, ☎ 03-445-4052.

My Favorite Wineries

Chard Farm is at the end of a long gravel road that clings to the side of a mountain. At the bottom of the slope is the Kawarau River. In the old days, this was the only route between Cromwell and Queenstown, but that was long before 1987 when Rob Hay got his hands on the place and planted grapes. Chard Road, ☎ 03-442-6110.

Leaving Chard, you'll have a clear view of the AJ Hackett bungy bridge. Turn right and up the road is Gibbston Valley Wines, where there's a restaurant, a gift shop, and a cheesery. SH6, ☎ 03-442-6910.

Another minute or two up SH6 is Peregrine Wines – one of my all time favorite wineries to visit. The wines are great, the setting is lovely and the winery's roof is shaped like the wing of a bird in flight. ☎ 03 442 4000.

On Bannockburn's Felton Road, one vineyard leads to another in one of the region's warmest areas. Mt. Difficulty is a must stop for its state-of-the-art facility and gold-medal wines. Felton Road, ☎ 03-445-3445.

Providing a good visitor experience is the goal at Olssens of Bannockburn. They host concerts, open their gardens for wandering, and serve platter of light food . Felton Road, ☎ 03-445-1716.

The three-level gravity-flow winery at Felton Road Winery was custom-built for gentle handling of grapes and juice. Plantings began here in 1992 and there are no posh names on the bottles – the best are simply called Block 3 and Block 5. At an area called Cornish Point, they've planted a veritable Pinot laboratory – 23 combinations of clones and rootstocks. Felton Road, ☎ 03-445-0885.

◆ Cromwell

Modern Cromwell was redeveloped after the building of the Clyde Dam and subsequent filling of Lake Dunstan. It's on the main route between Wanaka and Queenstown and between Queenstown, Wanaka and Dunedin. Use Cromwell to access the wineries of Bannockburn (see *Adventures With Wine*, above), as well as the remote Nevis Valley – and the Nevis Bungy. The Nevis Road is the highest public road in New Zealand. Old Cromwell is good for a nose around some reconstructed buildings from pre-dam days (the original commercial center of Cromwell was flooded) and Bendigo lies between Cromwell and Tarras on SH8. It's a ghost town now, but worthy of a snoop. From Cromwell to Queenstown, it's a spectacular trip through the Kawarau Gorge, where the Kawarau River flows energetically,

draining Lake Wakatipu into Lake Dunstan. The Gorge walls, up to 1,200 meters (3,900 feet) high, will be in your rear-view mirror as you enter the Gibbston Valley.

Information Sources

The Cromwell Information Centre and Museum is in The Mall and open daily. ☎ 03-445-0212.

Where to Stay

Willowdene is a 140-year-old cottage in Bannockburn, with full kitchen, laundry and can offer dinner, bed and breakfast if you prefer. Near the walkways to the gold sluicings (and not far from the wineries, either). ☎ 03-445-0125, fax 03-445-0130 ($$).

Golden Gate Lodge is right across from The Mall. There are studio units, a café and bar. www.goldengate.co.nz, Barry Ave, ☎ 03-445-1777 or 0800-104-451, fax 03-445-1776 ($$-$$$).

The Cromwell Top Ten Holiday Park is your best bet for pleasant budget accommodation and has cabins, apartments and motel units in addition to tent and power sites. www.cromwellholidaypark.co.nz, 1 Alpha Street, ☎ 03-445-0164 or 0800-107-275, fax 03-445-0431 ($-$$).

Where to Eat

There are the usual outlets offering café fare and take-out, but the new Fusée Rouge Café on The Mall is definitely the best place for a cup of coffee and a healthy lunch.

You can fill your cooler before heading down the road at the Cromwell Bakery, also on The Mall, and at any number of fruit stands in the area – there's at least one on every major road leading in and out of town.

◆ Alexandra

The service center for the region, Alexandra or "Alex" is a good place to pick up needed supplies before heading into the more touristy and expensive areas of Queenstown and Wanaka. Like the rest of Central, Alex had its beginnings in gold – and a stop in the Alexandra Museum and Art Gallery at the corner of Thompson and Walton Streets will fill in any gaps in your knowledge of the region's history.

Information Sources

The very helpful and extremely well-stocked Central Otago Visitor Information Centre can be reached at info@tco.org.nz and is located at 22 Centennial Ave, ☎ 03-448-9515.

Where to Stay

There are a few motels in town to consider, including Alexandra Garden Court, Manuherikia Road, ☎ 03-448-8295 or 0800-736-116; Almond Court, 53 Killarney Street, ☎ 03-448-7667 or 0800-256-663; and Alexandra Heights, 125 Centennial Avenue, ☎ 03-448-6366 or 0800-862-539. All have a range of room options ($$-$$$).

Where to Eat

Briar and Thyme is the restaurant of choice. Centennial Avenue ($$-$$$).

◆ Clyde

Just 10 km (six miles) west of Alexandra and 24 km (15 miles) east of Cromwell is the delightfully quaint town of Clyde. There is a very enjoyable walk along the river connecting Clyde to Alexandra; it takes about three hours. The path is used by bikes, horses and dogs, so keep your eyes open. The Clyde Lookout Point is signposted and worth a stop.

Where to Stay

Top of the heap for interesting accommodation is Olivers, where rooms are in the old smokehouse, stables and lodge. www.olivers.co.nz, 34 Sunderland Street, ☎ 03-449-2860 fax 03-449-2862 ($$$).

Dunstan House was built in 1900 as a hotel and it's been one ever since. A very affordable place to stay with two lounges for relaxin

gand a massive veranda to watch the passers-by. www.dunstanhouse.co.nz, 29 Sunderland Street, ☎ 03-449-2295, fax 03-449-2566 ($$-$$$).

Hartley Arms is a small backpacker hostel that is just delightful! It's set off the street in a garden and there are three rooms, a pleasant kitchen and BBQ. Linen is available. hartleyarms@xtra.co.nz, 25 Sunderland Street, ☎ 03-449-2700 ($)

Where to Eat

The food at the Dunstan House was described to me as "loosely Italian-based, but also New Zealand fare," and that's probably a fair enough comment. Alexander Wine Company is their own label and tastings are conducted at the restaurant. It's a delightful, friendly and warm place to eat very good food ($$-$$$).

Across the street is Olivers, with things like venison and seafood to go along with a good wine list. The restaurant is in the old miners' general store and is open for lunch and dinner ($$-$$$).

Post Office Café and Bar has contemporary New Zealand food and a massive open fire (also outdoor seating for the summetime). At the corner of Blythe and Matau Streets, ☎ 03-449-2488 ($-$$).

The Dunstan Hotel has typical Kiwi bar meals ($).

Dunedin to Central Otago & the Roxburgh Valley

SH8 breaks away from SH1 at Clarkesville, about an hour south of Dunedin. It's 33 km (20 miles) to Lawrence and, whether it's in the middle of summer or the snowy depths of winter, this is a lovely area to travel. There are some good local walks, swimming and gold panning in the river. Details on all the local activities can be found at the very helpful Lawrence Information Centre & Museum, lawrence.infocentre@xtra.co.nz, Ross Place, ☎ 03-485-9222.

The Wild Walnut, 32 Ross Pl, Lawrence, ☎ 0-3-485 9529, has chutneys, preserves and muffins to go with your coffee, and Jazzed on Java is another good option for a coffee and a snack. ☎ 03-485-9234

Continuing on from Lawrence, you'll soon reach the Beaumont Hotel – a simple country hotel and pub. The next town of any size that you'll come to is Roxburgh, which is a fruit-lovers paradise. The Roxburgh Dam and Lake Roxburgh are rather hard to miss and the latter is a popular spot for waterskiing, swimming and jet-boating. There are walks from 15 minutes to five hours in the Roxburgh area, with views of the area and historic sites. Pick up a copy of Teviot Valley Walkways. Between Roxburgh and Alexandra, Fruitlands Café and Gallery, built in 1871, retains historic charm in the café, pub and gallery.

◆ Information Sources

The Roxburgh Information Centre, roxinfo@codc.govt.nz, 120 Scotland Street, ☎ 03-446-8920.

◆ Places to Stay

The Seed Farm is a gorgeous, reasonably priced B&B with accommodation in the old stables. SH8, nine km (five miles) south of Roxburgh, ☎ 03-446-6824, fax 03-446-6024 ($$$).

The Lake Roxburgh Lodge is a fabulous choice for a night or two – all levels of accommodation and a laundry list of fun things to do make this a really special spot. Tramping, biking, kayaking, and fishing are a few of the choices. www.lakeroxburghlodge.co.nz, ☎ 03-446-8220, fax 03-446-8799 ($-$$$).

The Roxburgh Family Motor Camp has dorms and cabins. ☎ 03-446-8093 ($-$$).

◆ Where to Eat

It's a toss up: either at the Seed Farm or the Lake Roxburgh Lodge.

The Maniototo or "Plain of Blood"

Central Otago is great for fantastic rocks just jutting out of the ground, and scenery so vivid and amazing that your eyes just can't take it in. Nowhere is this more evident than the Maniototo Plains. The area was traveled by Maori in search of greenstone, but there is no evidence of permanent Maori occupation. The gold rush

certainly made its mark and many of the gold-rush-era towns remain. Accommodation is not plentiful, but delightful; little pubs and lodges and charming B&Bs make the often-dusty drive well worth your while.

Maniototo

◆ Getting Here

Turning inland at Palmerston, you'll be on the Pig Route (or Pigroot, depending on who you listen to). In about 10 minutes you'll get to Dunback, which is just a tiny little spot. Another hour (about 60 km/36 miles) and you'll find yourself in Ranfurly.

◆ Information Sources

The Maniototo Information Centre in Ranfurly, maniototo@centralotagonz.com, is in a gorgeous stone building on Charleton Street, ☎/fax 03-444-9970.

Grahame Sydney, *one of New Zealand's major artists, paints scenes of the everyday landscape of Central Otago. He's an incredible talent and his work is easily recognized; you don't have to spend much time in New Zealand without coming across a painting or print.*

◆ Ranfurly

Ranfurly has been getting more attention over the last few years since the Central Otago Rail Trail opened (it’s halfway along). There are a few Art Deco-era buildings and shops and the town is embracing its Art Deco history. The fourth weekend of February is Rural Art Deco Weekend, with vintage music, cars, and dress.

Where to Stay

DUNBACK

The Highwayman Motel, just 10 minutes off SH1, won the best country hotel award in 2003-2004. There are nine rooms, including one family suite. The restaurant serves good old Kiwi tucker. Very much a family hotel and the tariff includes cooked breakfast. ☎ 03-465-0440 fax 03-465-0441 ($$).

RANFURLY

Ranfurly Lion Hotel has singles, doubles, twins and backpacker accommodation. ranfurly.hotel@xtra.co.nz, 10 Charlemont Street, ☎ 03-444-9140 fax 03-444-9142 ($).

Ranfurly Motel is a small (only six units) older style, convenient spot. Studios have separate kitchens, and breakfast is available upon request. robbieandjoan@xtra.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-444-9383, 1 Davis Street ($$).

Ranfurly Motor Camp has apartments, cabins and backpackers as well as tent and power sites. Reade Street, across from the swimming pool, ☎/fax 03-444-9144 ($-$$).

Peter’s Farm Hostel is a very friendly simple place on a sheep station. There’s a big country kitchen, separate TV lounge and plenty of space for tents. Free bikes, fishing rods and kayaks to use in the river. Ride from here to the rail trail. www.petersfarm.co.nz, phone for directions, ☎ 03-444-9083 ($).

◆ Naseby & Dansey’s Pass

Naseby was once the largest settlement in the gold-mining region. Gold was discovered in the Hogburn in May, 1863 and within three months, there were 2,000 miners, 18 stores, two butchers, a baker and 14 hotels. There is a settler’s museum and a motoring museum. For the more active, you can find fishing, forest walks, mountain biking.

Getting Here

Heading north from Ranfurly on SH85, in about five minutes you will spot a small side-road on your right. Take it for 14 km/eight miles and you will be in Naseby.

Don't miss the chance to travel to Dansey's Pass, for a real look into the country. You can continue on to Duntroon on SH83, or just make the 16-km (10-mile) drive from Naseby and return the same way. Much of the Kyeburn Diggings Road from Naseby is gravel, but it is well-maintained.

Adventures

IN WATER

The local swimming hole, with its partially paved floor, is right at the edge of the forest and deepens gradually, suiting all swimmers.

Curling: *Maniototo is the home of curling in New Zealand. This sport originated in Scotland and was first introduced to New Zealand in the McKenzie Country of South Canterbury..*

ON BIKES

The Naseby Forest is a fabulously fun place to ride! The center of the action is The Royal Hotel (see details below), where you can rent a bike, get yours fixed or just learn about the trails. There's nothing too insane, but it's all good fun. Royal Hotel owner Kila is a passionate mountain biker and will take you on a guided ride or just share ideas and stories.

Sightseeing

You wouldn't really expect a fashion museum in the middle of the Maniototo. But it's there. Stop in at Eden Hore's 1970s fashion museum, about halfway between Naseby and the Danseys Pass Inn. The story goes that the uncle of John Steele, who owns the property with his wife Margaret, started to collect "frocks" made of wool, having been a sheep farmer all his life. Back in the 1970s Benson and Hedges sponsored a NZ fashion awards show and, as designers learned of the interest in fashion, started to donate frocks after the award show. Glenshee Park, ☎ 03-444-9624. Open daily.

Where to Stay

NASEBY

The Royal Hotel was built in April 1879, and was the first hotel in Central Otago to have a separate entrance for the ladies. It’s one of the original coach inns, and there are simple rooms, friendly service, and all at a cheap price. It’s also the center for mountain bike information and trips. www.naseby.co.nz, Earne Streeet, ☎ 03-444-9990 ($).

Larchview Holiday Park has houses, cabins, chalets, power and tent sites. It’s on 17 acres of trees and next to the swimming dam. johnsjoynaseby@paradise.net.nz, Swimming Dam Road, ☎/fax 03-444-9904 ($-$$).

DANSEY’S PASS

Driving on the Kyeburn Diggings road, along the landscape of jagged cliffs and rock, you’ll go around a corner and out comes a stand of trees. Within those trees is the Danseys Pass Inn, built in 1862, with the kitchen, bar and dining room added on in 1990. The inn is on the road… not across from it or beside it, but right there on the road and at the base of Mt. Nobbler. The story goes that the fellow who built the inn was paid in beer – one for every piece of shingle set. Even if you don’t stay, drive on in for a cuppa or a glass of wine, a snack or lunch. Dinner is scrumptious country food. (It’s about half an hour from Naseby, and 1¾ hours from Queenstown.) www.danseyspass.co.nz, ☎ 03-444-9048 ($$$).

Where to Eat

NASEBY

The Royal Hotel is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, has outdoor seating and, in addition to hearty pub food, has some healthy and modern options ($-$$).

Cottage Garden Café offers freshly baked breads, cakes, and cookies. Refreshing lunches and delicious dinner menu. Reserve for dinner and it’s a good place to hang out with a coffee, inside or out ($-$$).

Ancient Briton Hotel has a full pub and country menu. www.nasebytoppub.co.nz ($-$$).

◆ Ranfurly to Alexandra

The drive from Ranfurly to Alexandra is just beautiful.

Getting Here

From Ranfurly on SH85, it's just 60 km/36 miles to Ophir and another 20 km/12 miles from there to Alexandra. There is a (mostly gravel) side-loop (about 10 km/six miles) to St Bathans that turns off 25 km (15 miles) from Ranfurly, You can also access the St Bathans loop from Becks (17 km/10 miles), and from this direction, the road is paved all the way.

Sightseeing

Be sure to stop at the picturesque Wedderburn Tavern, if not for a drink at least for a look around. Then take a side-trip to Oturehua for a pop into the tavern or a nose around the T. Gilchrist & Sons General Merchants historic store – it's been a general store since 1902 and it still looks like the turn of the century.

Blue Lake, St. Bathans

Just down the road is Hayes Engineering Works, where you can see early 1900s engineering workshops. Open Saturday and Sunday from 11 am-4 pm or by arrangement. ☎ 03-444-5801 or 03-444-5817.

Authors Pick: *Put St. Bathans on your list of stops in Central Otago. In the hollow between the Dunstan and Hawkdun Ranges, this little town, population 13, is known for Blue Lake, created by the early gold miners. It's a delightful little stop in the gold country.*

Where the road to St. Bathans meets SH85 is Becks and continuing along, you'll pass through Lauder, Omakau and, by side-trip, Ophir,

before coming to Alexandra. This drive alongside the Raggedy Range is fabulous.

Where to Stay

There are a few hotels and B&Bs sprinkled around the area, including the White Horse Hotel (☎ 03-447-3685) in Becks and the Broadhaven Bed and Breakfast in Lauder (☎ 03-447-3099). Ophir Lodge (☎ 03-447-3339) is a backpacker hostel with rooms in brick cottages and there are single rooms as well as twin and double hotel rooms at the Blacks Hotel (☎ 03-447-3826), also in Ophir.

The Vulcan Hotel in St. Bathans is a Kiwi icon that has been featured in more than one TV and print ad. Built in 1882, it still serves as a hotel (there were 13 hotels and 2,000 miners in St. Bathans during its heyday) and a fabulous restaurant serving very good, tasty food. There are also three cottages for rent (including one in the old jail cells) that are just down the road from the hotel. Dinner might be venison, blue cod, chicken, lamb or something else fabulous. ☎/fax 03-447-3629. Accommodation ($$-$$$), meals ($$-$$$).

Coastal Otago

Traveling north from Dunedin on SH1, in less than an hour you'll arrive in Palmerston.

Continuing north from Palmerston, you quickly arrive at Shag Point and, not too much farther, Moeraki, from where it's a straight shot to Oamarau.

◆ Watchable Wildlife

Yellow-eyed penguins (YEPs) come ashore at Shag Point, as do New Zealand fur seals. Seeing penguins in the wild is one of the most incredible experiences. If you're lucky, you may see a YEP coming home after a day's fishing. Please follow posted instructions, respect that you are their visitor and don't harass the animals.

The small fishing town of Moeraki (about 95 km/59 miles north of Dunedin and 40 km/24 miles south of Oamaru) is a good, quiet stopover, where you can visit penguins to the north and south, see the Moeraki boulders, go fishing, take a walk or just listen to the waves. Fishing charters can be arranged through Catch-A-Fish Moeraki,

☎ 03-439-4690 or 027-222-4867, or Moeraki Fishing Charters, ☎ 03-439-4868 or 025-238-1468.

Head out to the lighthouse for the yellow-eyed penguin viewing area. It's about five km (three miles) out of town. Park at the lighthouse (where there is a penguin rehabilitation program) and walk down to the viewing hide. The hide is filled with information about the YEPs. Lots of sea lions live around here, too. From town, turn on either David or Tenby Street and follow the sign to Lighthouse Road.

Moeraki Boulders

Sitting at the edge of the sea, these almost perfectly spherical orbs look as if they've been left behind after a gang of giants were playing croquet. In fact, they were not deposited or dropped on the sea at all – they were shaped within the mudstone – the ancient sea floor. Think about how an oyster makes a pearl – a grain of sand is an irritant, and the oyster builds layers of pearl over the sand. These boulders were formed in much the same way. They began as small pieces of bone or shell, and minerals in the sea bed crystallized around them equally in all directions. The mudstone seabed was then uplifted and formed the cliffs along the coast. As the cliffs eroded, the boulders, classified as septarian concretions, were released, appearing to have been dropped from above. Other boulders like these can be seen at Shag Point and Katiki.

◆ Where to Stay

The Moeraki Motel has simple and friendly accommodation. ☎ 03-439-4862 ($$).

The Moeraki Motor Camp has tourist apartments, cabins, motel units, power and tent sites. The owner bakes fresh bread every morning! ☎/fax 03-439-4759 ($-$$).

◆ Where to Eat

There is a small café at the Moeraki Boulder Visitor Centre ($-$$).

Moeraki Tavern has dependable old pub food, even though it's a new pub. Right on the main drag, across from the harbor ($-$$).

Fleurs Place has a good selection of seafood and other dishes, tastefully prepared and presented. This is the best place to eat by far. Full breakfast menu and good coffee. www.fleursplace.com, at the Old Jetty ☎ 03-439-5980 ($$).

Oamaru

While towns in Central Otago were getting their start in gold, the port town of Oamaru was busy becoming the region's commercial center and reached fame via the limestone and frozen meat industries. First settled in 1853, by the late 1870s it was the ninth-largest town in New Zealand and today is an enjoyable and pretty place to spend time. This is one place in the country where you'll truly feel you're in a historic district. Oamaru stone is still popular with sculptors – it's soft to carve and hardens with time. The proximity of little blue and yellow-eyed penguin colonies is an added draw.

Did you know? *The first frozen meat (lamb) shipped from New Zealand to the UK was processed at Totara Estate, just outside of Oamaru. Open daily in the summer from 10 am to 4 pm, Wednesday to Sunday during the winter. $7 adults, $2 children. ☎ 03-433-1195.*

◆ Information Sources

Check out www.tourismwaitaki.com.

The staff is very helpful at the Oamaru Visitor Information Centre, 1 Thames Street, ☎ 03-434-1656.

◆ Adventures

Watchable Wildlife

Little blue penguins are the smallest in the world and are found throughout New Zealand waters.

The Oamaru Blue Penguin Colony is within walking distance of the town center and housed in an old quarry. You can view the penguins in the evening as they come home from sea. Call the center first to find out the best time for watching. The visitor center is open 9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday, 10 am to 5 pm weekends. $12.50 adults, $8 children. www.penguins.co.nz, http://www.penguins.co.nz, Breakwater Road, ☎ 03-433-1195.

Yellow-eyed penguins can be seen at Bushy Beach, usually two hours before dark. There is a viewing hide (free of charge).

On Water

Keltra Kayaks has one of the best things going – they run kayak trips all along the coast, from Oamaru to Nugget Point. There is so much wildlife along here that you're not going to be disappointed. Some of the trips are on the sea, some on inland estuaries. Trip prices begin at $85. ☎ 03-465-8198.

◆ Sightseeing

Famed New Zealand author Janet Frame (who died in 2004) spent quite a bit of time in Oamaru and used many sites in her books. Pick up a copy of the *Janet Frame Heritage Trail* brochure. You should also get a copy of *Historic Oamaru* from the information center and have a wander around town.

There are over 20 historic buildings in town, including St. Paul's Presbyterian Church and St. Patrick's Basilica. The Criterion Hotel is especially lovely, as is the Courthouse. In the historic district is a wide range of business – from modern cafés to a scrumptious German

bakery to a wool-buying and -processing shed to – the first one I've ever seen – as well as an organ factory, where they repair and build pipe organs.

The Forrester Art Gallery is beautiful and there's always something wonderful to look at. Open daily, 10:30 am to 4 pm, closed Christmas and Good Friday. Thames Street, ☎ 03-434-1653.

Guided Option

Whitestone Walking Tours depart from the information center six times daily. ☎ 03-434-1656.

North Otago Heritage Tours runs day and evening tours around Oamaru and the local area. Evening tours include a visit to the penguins. ☎ 03-434-1656.

To really get into the feel of the historic district, take a ride with Whitestone Carriage Services. Garden tours and penguin trips are also available. ☎ 03-349-5155.

◆ Where to Stay

If all the history has you wanting to stay in an historical building, try out the Criterion Hotel, shown at right. The rooms are Victorian in theme, and some have ensuite bathrooms. The breakfast part of the deal is substantial. www.criterion.net.nz, 3 Tyne Street, ☎ 03-434-6247, fax 03-434-6248 ($$$-$$$$).

If that price is a little high, but you still want history, try the Empire Hotel. It's in an historic (150-year-old) building, has the modern conveniences, including free Internet, and bikes available for guests. It's right in town, too. empirehotel@hotmail.com, 13 Thames Street, ☎ 03-434-3446, fax 03-439-5215 ($).

Oamaru has quite a few dependable motels with rooms that include bath and kitchen. Budget options include Alpine Motel, modern and clean with just 10 units and close to town, 285 Thames Street, ☎ 03-434-5038, fax 03-434-6301. Another is the nearby Midway Motel with 11 units with patios. 289 Thames Street, ☎ 03-434-5388 or 0800-447-

744. Colonial Lodge has all ground-floor units; it's simple but clean and a few minutes away from the town center, 509 Thames Highway, ☎ 03-437-0999 or 0800-102-999, fax 03-437-0992 ($$-$$).

The Red Kettle YHA is in an old-fashioned house just off the main drag and has twins, doubles and dorms. www.stayyha.com, corner of Reed and Cross Streets, ☎/fax 03-434-5008 ($).

◆ Where to Eat

The Star & Garter is one of NZ's oldest restaurants, serving lunch and dinner every day. 9 Itchen Street, ☎ 03-434-5246 ($$).

Try the Woolstore Café for sandwiches and all-day breakfast. 1 Tyne Street, ☎ 03-434-8336 ($-$$).

The Whitestone Cheese Factory & Café is the choice for a coffee, lunch and, of course, cheese. They sell a huge variety of their organic cheeses here and you can taste many of the products. Corner of Torridge & Humber Streets ($-$$).

Waitaki

Heading inland from Oamaru, you'll travel along SH83 or the Weston-Tokarahi Road. Both lead through the Waitaki Valley and eventually come together near Duntroon. Throughout this region are Maori rock paintings; the most accessible are the Tikarora Maori Rock Art, just west of Duntroon. These paintings are believed to date back to the moa hunting days – the visitor center in Oamaru has maps with a few noted and directions to others. Other interesting rock structures around Duntroon include the unusually-formed Elephant Rocks on the Weston-Tokarahi Road (take your camera and your sense of humor) and the Earthquakes Area just beyond Duntroon. Take a left at the church and follow the road about six or seven km (three to four miles).

Upper Waitaki Valley

Skull of ancient dolphin in Vanished World Centre

The Vanished World Fossil Trail & Centre focuses on the geology of the Waitaki area, and the fossils from vanished life forms found in the Duntroon area. The region, like most of New Zealand, was once under the sea, and inhabited by lots of creatures that no longer exist. When they died, their skeletons sank to the seabed, eventually being compressed and forming limestone. The center has displays and a map of the area; the staff is keen to share their passion. $8. SH83, Duntroon, ☎ 03-431-2024.

Continuing west from Duntroon, you'll next reach Kurow, which is big on the fishing circuits. It's also big on the power circuits, as it's the service center for the Benmore Power Station. The Benmore Dam is the largest earth-filled water-retaining structure in New Zealand and the volume is about 1½ times that of Wellington harbor! Tours of the power station (11 am, 1 pm and 3 pm, $5 adults, no children under four and no one with a pacemaker allowed) must be booked through the Benmore Information Centre, open daily during the summer, and weekends from June to mid-October.

Next along SH83 is Otemata and, just after that, a very good fresh fruit and vegetable stand! Omarama (*oh-mara-ma* not *oh-ma-rama*) is next. You'll find a couple of quick eats here and a few places to stay, but, unless you're sticking around for a glider meet, you might want to push on to a more happening spot.

◆ Information Sources

The Omarama Information Centre is on Main Road, ☎ 03-438-9544.

◆ Sightseeing

Here's your chance: Omarama is famous for wind – the warm, northwesterly thermal wind that glider pilots love. Pilots come from all over the world and gliding records are met and broken here. If you've wanted to give it a try, this is as good a location as you're going to get. Call Alpine Soaring, ☎ 03-438-9600.

You can put Clay Cliffs Scenic Reserve on your list of bizarre landscape structures. The clay cliffs and columns have been formed from

the action of the Ostler fault, which runs through the area. The weather does its erosive thing and makes these pipelike structures. It's a $5 entry (and reached by a gravel road, which becomes boggy and impassable after rain). More clay cliffs are about seven km (four miles) along SH8 toward the Lindis Pass – they can be seen from the road.

Clay cliffs, lower Waitaki Valley

◆ Where to Stay

Buscat Station Backpackers is eight km (five miles) north of town and is on a working sheep and cattle station. SH8, toward Twizel, ☎ 03 438-9646 ($).

The Omarama Holiday Park has tourist apartments and cabins, tent and power sites. At the junction of SH8 and SH83. ☎ 03-438-9875 ($-$$).

The Ahuriri Motel has studio and full-service motel units. There's a BBQ and outdoor area. SH83, ☎ 03-438-9451 or 0800-438-945 ($$-$$$).

1. Fiordland National Park
2. Milford Track
3. Te Anau Wildlife Centre
4. Milford Deep Underwater Observatory
5. West Arm Underground Power Station
6. Kepler Track
7. Hollyford Track
8. Rees-Dart Track
9. Dusky Sound Track
10. Routeburn Track
11. Greenstone & CaplesTracks
12. Cathedral Peaks, West Arm Ferry
13. South Coast & Hump Ridge Tracks
N
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Milford Sound
Milford Sound
Paradise
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94
Bligh Sound
George Sound
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Caswell Sound
Charles Sound
Nancy Sound
Thompson Sound
North Fork
Middle Fork
Eglington River
Te Anau Downs
Lake Te Anau
South Fork
Te Anau
Doubtful Sound
Dagg Sound
Deep Cove
West Arm
Manapouri
Mossburn
Breaksea Sound
Resolution Island
Dusky Sound
Blackmount
Ohai
Winton
West Cape
Lake Fraser
Clifden
Tuatapere
Preservation Inlet
Te Waewae Bay
Invercargill
Long Reef
Long Point
Sand Hill Point
Foveaux Strait
Fiordland
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Fiordland

Introduction

If there is one region that screams out "New Zealand," this is it. The sites around Fiordland are, in Kiwi lingo, gob-smacking. High mountains, deep lakes and thundering waterfalls are only part of the stunning scenery at the lower corner of the South Island. It is a dramatic landscape, created first by the thrusting and folding of the earth's crust, then carved by glaciers and finally filled in by the sea – the deep U-shaped valleys typical of a fiord landscape are evident throughout the area. In Milford Sound, for example, the walls rise steeply about 1,700 meters (5,500 feet) above the water, and extend 300 meters (975 feet) below the water's surface. The plant and animal life within Fiordland is like what Gondwanaland must have had all those hundreds of thousands of years ago. Several threatened native birds make their home in Fiordland, including the takahe, once believed to be extinct, which was rediscovered in 1948.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Getting Here 412
- Information Sources 413
- Adventures 413
- Where to Stay 426
- Where to Eat 427

The flightless takahe is the largest living member of the rail family. It is brightly colored green and blue and has very substantial legs, feet and beak. Introduced deer are the biggest threat to the takahe. The Department of Conservation has a takahe recovery plan to help establish populations in Fiordland and a handful of predator-free islands. There are currently about 145 takahe living in the park and a few more pairs scattered around offshore islands.

Other birds seen within the park include yellow-crowned parakeets, robins, kaka, and the more common tomtits, brown creepers, grey warblers, fantails, tui, bellbirds, wood pigeons and keas. The national park is also home to New Zealand's only native mammals, long-tailed and short-tailed bats.

Fiordland landscape is marked by temperate rainforest – you will be astounded by the trees, ferns, mosses and vines. While looking around the hillsides, keep in mind how little soil is there – these plants support themselves on the mold from degenerating plant materials.

Fiords

The bodies of water referred to here as "sounds" (Milford Sound, Dusky Sound, Doubtful Sound) are not sounds, but fiords. Sounds are, in fact, flooded river beds – such as the Marlborough Sounds. Fiords are glacially carved. There are 14 fiords – Milford Sound is the northernmost and Preservation Inlet the southernmost.

Mitre Peak, Milford Sound

Not only is Fiordland notable for its birdlife, the waterways of the fiords sustain an equally unique marine environment. Because the rainfall is so high, a permanent freshwater lens is created on top of the more dense salt water of the sea. When the rain falls on the land,

it filters through the ground to the sea, gathering tannins from the vegetation along the way – making the lens darker and cutting down the amount of light that reaches the salt water. Two things happen – most of the marine life is restricted to the top 40 meters (130 feet) where some light gets through, and the marine life is typical of that seen at much greater depths. Among the marine life in the fiords are brachiopods; clam-like animals that haven't evolved at all in the last 300 million years! The fiords are also home to the world's biggest population of red coral and black coral trees – over seven million colonies exist. Some are over 200 years old, and some are in water as shallow as eight meters (26 feet). Marine life that breaks the surface includes bottlenose dolphins, fur seals, Fiordland crested penguins and little blue penguins. Just offshore of the fiords, there are often whales.

Fiordland National Park, established in 1952 and the largest national park in New Zealand (2.9 million acres), is a walkers' and trampers' paradise. There are over 500 km (300 miles) of tracks within the national park, which is part of Te Wahipounamu World Heritage Area. Some of New Zealand's most famous walks, including the famous Milford Track, have their beginnings and/or endings in the park, but there are also short day-walks begging to be explored. There are hundreds of lakes within the region, including Lake Hauroko (the deepest lake in New Zealand) and Lake Te Anau (the second-largest).

Rain: *To get a rainforest, you need rain. Annually, there are over 200 rainy days here and rainfall in the area varies from 48 inches in Te Anau to 318 inches in Milford Sound. In January 1994, a storm raged in Fiordland and dumped 27 inches of rain in 24 hours. Roads and tracks were closed for a month.*

While Maori did not have permanent settlements in the area, many of the tracks within Fiordland were used by the ancient Maori for gathering food and pounamu (greenstone), particularly the translucent takiwai stone. In 1773, Captain Cook and his crew became the first Europeans to visit the area, and they stayed for five weeks. They were followed by sealers and whalers. It's hard to imagine how wild this place must have been during the late 1700s when the rough and tumble sealers and whalers were establishing settlements.

Getting Here

◆ By Air

In addition to scenic flights (see below), Air Fiordland Ltd., www.airfiordland.com, ☎ 03-249-7505 or 0800-103-404, provides air services to Te Anau and Fiordland from Queenstown.

◆ By Car

Te Anau, at the junction of SH94 and SH95, is the base for exploration of Fiordland and is a two-hour drive from either Queenstown or Invercargill.

◆ By Bus

A number of transport operators offer service to Te Anau. Catch a Bus operates between Dunedin and Te Anau by way of Lumsden, Gore, and Balclutha. ☎ 03-471-4141 or 027-433-8612. Scenic Shuttle travels between Te Anau and Invercargill via Lake Manapouri and the Southern Scenic Route. Weekdays in winter, daily in summer. ☎ 03-249-7654 or 0800-277-483. Top Line Tours runs between Te Anau and Queenstown. Daily service and options to Manapouri if booked in advance. ☎ 03-249-8059. Atomic Shuttles runs day-trips between Te Anau and Milford Sound, hooking up with MV *Friendship* for an optional trip on the water. They also operate connections from Queenstown and Wanaka. www.atomictravel.co.nz, ☎ 03-322-8883.

Tracknet provides transport around Fiordlands and between Fiordlands and Queenstown. They have all sorts of options, especially geared for trampers. www.greatwalks.com, ☎ 03-249-7777. For an off-the-beaten-path trip, you can take the vintage steamship TSS *Earnslaw* (www.fiordlandtravel.co.nz/main/earnslw) to Milford Sound's Mitre Peak Station and then go on Back Track Transport for a bus ride through the Von Valley, into Mavora Lakes and then Te Anau. This is definitely something different and you'll see lots of scenery. www.tracknet.net. ☎ 03-249-7457 or 0800-483-2628.

Tip: *Many of the scenic bus trips to Milford Sound originate in Queenstown. This makes for an incredibly long day (12 to 14 hours) and I guarantee you will be exhausted. Te Anau is a lovely town – come here, spend a night or two and then venture to Milford (or Doubtful).*

Information Sources

Destination Fiordland takes care of this region and can be visited at www.fiordland.org.nz. For more information on the Milford road, take a look at www.milfordroad.co.nz.

The Fiordland iSITE Visitor Centre is open seven days a week, with extended hours in summer. vin@realjourneys.co.nz, located on Lakefront Drive, in the same building as the Real Journeys office, ☎ 03-249-8900, fax 03-249-7022.

Take a look at www.doc.govt.nz for information on any of the walks or the national park. Then visit what must be one of the most helpful DoC centers in New Zealand. (They also have a large gift shop.) November to April, open daily 9:30 am to 5; May to October, open Monday-Friday from 9 am to noon and 1 to 4:30 pm. Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre, fiordlandvc@doc.govt.nz, ☎ 03-249-7924 fax 03-249-7613 and the Great Walks Booking Desk, greatwalksbooking@doc.govt.nz, ☎ 03-249-8514, fax 03-249-8515, are in the same building on Lake Front Drive.

◆ Emergency Services

Locator beacons can be rented at Mobil in Te Anau, ☎ 03-249-7247.

Mountain radios can be rented in Te Anau, ☎ 03-249-8363, and Invercargill, ☎ 03-216-3751.

Adventures

◆ Watchable Wildlife

DoC operates Te Anau Wildlife Centre. You can see many of the local native birds. Donations are appreciated and you can pick up a map and description of the birds and enclosures. On the Te Anau-

Manapouri Highway, just a 10-minute walk from DoC office. ☎ 03-249-7921 or 03-249-7924.

◆ On Water

There are plenty of boat options around, but one of the most enjoyable trips goes from Te Anau Downs to the Milford Track. You can ride along even if you're not doing the walk… it's a great introduction to the area, has fabulous views and the commentary gives you a bit of a history lesson about the place.

Across the lake are the Te Anau Glow-Worm Caves. There are 2½-hour tours conducted by Real Journeys, which include a boat ride and cave tour. Trips go in the afternoon and evening and cost $46 adults, $15 children. www.realjourneys.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7416 or 0800-656-501.

Milford Sound

While not the biggest fiord by far, Milford is the most spectacular. The steep, high-sided mountains and the waterfalls combine to make an incredible spot. I've explored Milford Sound by boat, kayak and helicopter – kayaking is great because you're at the water level and can really appreciate the immense size of the mountains and waterfalls; boats are good to get you farther but still at water level. The helicopter is an awesome way to see a lot of area in a short time.

Great Sights has bus tours from either Te Anau or Queenstown. They connect with Milford Sound Red Boat Cruises. Prices begin at $109 adults and more if lunch is included. www.greatsights.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-9445 or 0800-264-536.

For a smaller option (group size is limited to 20), try Milford Wilderness Explorer. They also connect with Milford Sound Red Boat Cruises. Prices begin at $115 adults. www.airfiordland.com, ☎ 03-249-7505 or 0800-107-505.

Trips 'n' Tramps is another small group tour (limit of 12 passengers) that includes a nature cruise. They have a fabulous option that includes a three-hour hike on the Routeburn Track to Key Summit on the return trip to Te Anau. As far as the guided drive options go, I think this one is the best value. Prices begin at $126 adults for the tour and cruise, $142 adults for the trip with the Routeburn walk. www.milfordtourswalks.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7081.

You can't miss the Real Journeys buses driving around – there are plenty of them and trip options are vast. They offer scenic and nature

On the Milford Track

cruises as well, as overnight (dinner, bed and breakfast) trips on boats that sleep 60. This is a very popular option. On the overnight trips, the boats have kayaks and tenders. Prices for day-trips (bus and boat) begin at $105 adults; overnight trips begin at $275 adults. Boat trips only begin at $45 adults. www.realjourneys.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7416 or 0800-656-501.

Milford Sound Red Boat Cruises runs boat trips up to seven times daily in the summer (abbreviated schedule in the winter). They can handle up to 400 passengers and there are lots of viewing decks and seats, as well as quite broad food options. Trips range from 1¾ hours to 2¾ hours. Prices begin at $46 adults. www.redboats.co.nz, ☎ 03-441-1137 or 0800-264-536.

Mitre Peak Cruises are on a smaller boat that carries a maximum of 60 passengers. They go out four times a day and other times for groups are available. Trips range from an hour and 40 minutes to two hours 10 minutes and prices begin at $49 adults. www.mitrepeak.com, ☎ 03-249-8110 or 0800-744-633.

Tip: *When booking a boat trip, ask if the interpretive information will be given in many languages, or just English. The reason I mention this is that some people find it tiring to listen to four or five translations of information all day.*

Milford Deep Underwater Observatory is in Harrison's Cove, the observatory is not an aquarium – it's a floating building, and the win-

dows of the viewing room expose the natural environment of the fiord. What you see depends on what happens to float past. Most of the cruise companies have options to visit the observatory, but you can also just visit Milford Deep by taking their shuttle. Prices begin at $45 (adults). www.milforddeep.co.nz, ☎/fax 03-249-9442 or 0800-326-969.

Doubtful Sound

Doubtful Sound

Doubtful Sound is different from Milford Sound in many ways, including the access to it. All trips on Doubtful start with a boat ride across Lake Manapouri, which is the second-deepest lake in New Zealand. Commentary about the lake makes the trip even more enjoyable than with the scenery alone! Frequented by kayaks, yachts and other boats, Manapouri is a popular recreational lake. Boat trips begin at Pearl Harbour and end at the far end of the lake, at West Arm, site of the West Arm Underground Power Station. Optional tours of the power station are available. The road takes you two km (just over one mile) underground. In the underground viewing room, there is a model of the power station, the lake and the fiord – helping to make sense of the engineering and construction. From the power station, access to Deep Cove of Doubtful Sound is by bus – the 22-km (13-mile) road offers river, mountain and valley views and frequent stops allow opportunities to see the plant life, particularly ferns and

mosses. The road was built during the construction of the power plant.

Doubtful Sound is the deepest fiord, and is much longer than Milford, with three arms and a main body that stretches 40 km (25 miles) to the Tasman Sea. Doubtful Sound doesn't have the narrow gorge feel or spectacular Mitre Peak of Milford, but by contrast is gentler and more peaceful. A one-day trip to Doubtful is a very full day – if you have the means, try to book on an overnight journey, either by kayak or cruise.

Fiordland Explorer Charters has a daily 10 am departure and includes a stop at the power station. Prices begin at $160 adults. explorercharters@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-6616 or 0800-434-673.

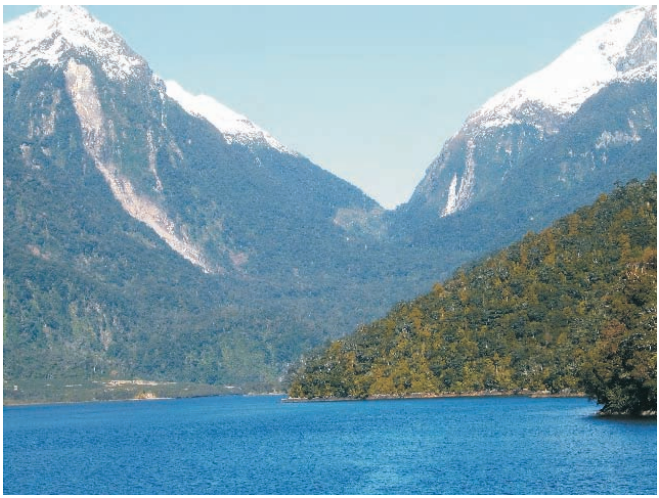
Real Journeys offers trips across the lake for a power station tour only, wilderness day cruises that include the lake, power station and fiord, and overnight cruises that offer the option of exploration by tender craft or kayak. The overnight option includes dinner, with bed and breakfast and there is an on-board nature guide. Day-trips begin at $190 for adults and overnight trips at $275. www.realjourneys.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-6602 or 0800-656-502.

Kayaking

Fiordland Wilderness Experience runs one-day sea kayaking trips in Milford Sound, two-, three- and five-day trips in Doubtful Sound and expedition tours in other sounds. They can also set you up on a kayak/walk option, can combine both the Milford and Doubtful Sound trips, and have guided trips on Lake Te Anau and Lake Manapouri. The one-day trips in Milford can include the scenic drive in, with stops of interest along the way. Prices begin at $95 adult. www.fiordlandseakayak.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7700 or 0800-200-434, fax 03-249-7768.

Rosco's Milford Sound Sea Kayaks has guided trips in Milford Sound only, but has both a one-day trip from Milford and the option of taking a boat to Stirling Falls and kayaking back to Milford Sound. They also have kayak/walk options. Prices begin at $98 adults. www.kayakmilford.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-8500 or 0800-476-726.

Focusing on Doubtful Sound, Adventure Kayak and Cruise begins their trips with a boat ride across Lake Manapouri and then a bus ride to Doubtful Sound. They have a really good option of doing a one-day guided trip and then rental on your own for the second day (camping out overnight), or a two-day guided trip. One day trips begin at $169 adults, $199 for two days with rental on your own and $295 for two



Doubtful Sound

days guided. www.fiordlandadventure.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-6626 or 0800-324-966.

Fishing

Fiordland Guides Ltd. are good, friendly, knowledgeable guides. www.fiordlandguides.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7832.

Mike Molineux is an older fellow who's been fishing here awhile. He's based in Manapouri. www.fishfiordland.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-8070.

Kiwi Reel & Rifle has fishing trips for the beginner up to the professional, including helicopter trips or half-day adventures. Prices begin at $155 per person. www.kiwireelrifle.com ☎ 03-249-9071.

◆ On Foot

Be careful: The weather on all of the tramps in Fiordland must be respected! Conditions can change dramatically and bad weather can bring cold and flooding. By all means, go tramping, but contact DoC for current information, track conditions and advice. The DoC website has track update information available. www.doc.govt.nz

Tramps

Most tracks in Fiordland are still okay to walk through April and May unless there is early snow on the alpine sections. The Dusky, Kepler, Milford and Routeburn are prone to avalanches from July to October, and have remained closed some years into November and even December. Check the DoC website for track conditions.

The 53.5-km (33-mile) iconic **Milford Track** is certainly the best known of New Zealand's Great Walks. It must be booked in advance (weeks to months), unguided walkers are limited to 40 each day, and no camping is permitted on the track. The huts are among the best in New Zealand – to some, too fancy for the wilderness. All have gas cookers (bring your own pots, though), flush toilets, and cold showers. Hut passes are $35 per night. For booking information, contact greatwalksbooking@doc.govt.nz, ☎ 03-249-8514, fax 03-249-8515.

The Milford Track is walked over four days. The **first day**, a short one (only five km/three miles, one to two hours), is devoted mostly to transport. Following a boat trip from Te Anau Downs to Glade Wharf, you'll walk along the Clinton River. There are a couple of side-tracks that you can take to warm up for the rest of the trip. **Day two** (16.5 km/10 miles, six hours) begins with a gradual climb along the Clinton River to Lake Mintaro, the river's source. You will have your first glimpses of McKinnon Pass from Hirere Falls and there is one short, steep section just before reaching the hut. **Day three** (14 km/eight miles, six hours) is the day to go over McKinnon Pass. The track zigzags to the top and, when clear, the views are spectacular. The tough time comes for many on the descent; watch out and take care of your knees. You can take a side-trip to Sutherland Falls, which is highly recommended, as they are New Zealand's highest falls and the fifth-highest in the world. The **final day** (18 km/11 miles, five to six hours) is mostly along and across the river. Look for eels and fish in the river and take the time to play around Bell Rock, a hollowed-out boulder.

Transport: It's probably best if you inquire at the Information Center or DoC office for specific timetables, but basically, as an independent walker you will need transport by boat ($65-70) from Te Anau to Glade House. Contact **Manuska**, sinbad@teanau.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7016; or **Tracknet**, res@greatwalksnz.com, ☎ 03-249-7777; or **Waterwings** (to go by floatplane), waterwings@teanau.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7405. On the other end of the track, you will need to arrange boat transport ($25.50) from Sandfly Point to Milford. Contact **Red Boats**, rbinfo@redboats.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7926, and then bus transport

Walking the Milford Track

from Milford to Te Anau, which is provided by. Tracknet. Alternatively, you can hook up with Rosco's Sea Kayaks, rosco@kayakmilford.co.nz, ☎ 0800-476-726, or Fiordland Wilderness Experiences, fiordland.sea.kayak@clear.net.nz, ☎ 03-249-7700 or 0800-200-434, to arrange a kayak trip at Sandfly Point and transport back to Te Anau. These trips range from $60-$65. Manuska offers a package deal of sail/kayak/bus for $120 and Tracknet has a similar bus, boat, kayak/boat, bus for $130.

Unlike most of the other Great Walks that started out as transport routes, the 60-km (37-mile) Kepler Track began as a tramping track, intending to take some of the load off the Milford and Routeburn. With a good mix of alpine and low valley, it is a great option. It can be walked in either direction, takes three to four days to complete and is a circular track – and consequently doesn't involve the high transport costs of the other walks. Farther east and higher in elevation, the Kepler is less about rain forest and more about alpine views and beech forest. The second day is a day on top, and in clear weather, offers fabulous views.

The recommended route is counter-clockwise and the 1½-hour walk along the edge of Lake Te Anau is often traded for a 20-minute boat ride to the starting point at Brod Bay. Because the huts are not booked in advance, you can adjust your walk to your time and schedule. The typical first day is eight km (five miles) and takes about four

hours, ending at Luxmore Hut, near which there are limestone caves to explore. This walk is above the bushline and has the biggest climb of the trip. The second day (14.6 km/nine miles) is five to six hours and takes you over the Luxmore Saddle (past two emergency shelters) to the Iris Burn Hut. Crossing the saddle can be dangerous if the wind is howling or there is heavy rain or winter conditions. Day three (16.2 km, 10 miles) is also five to six hours and leads through beech forest, along the river and into podocarp forest to Moturau Hut. The hut is beside a beach with great views of Lake Manapouri. The final day (15.5 km, 9.6 miles) is through beech forest and wetlands and winds along the Waiau River. It's a bit shorter (four to five hours) and ends at the Te Anau Control Gates. There is an option to use bus service from Rainbow Reach, which cuts the last day to one to two hours (six km/three miles).

Did you know? *Every year on the first weekend of December, there is a running race on the Kepler Track. The current record is four hours, 41 minutes.*

Transport: You can go by boat to Brod Bay with Sinbad Cruises, one-way $20, round-trip $35. sinbad@teanau.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7106 or 025-408-080; Lakeland Boat Hire, one-way $20, round-trip $35. stevesaunders@xtra.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-8364. Bus service from Te Anau to Control Gates and Te Anau from Rainbow Reach is available through Tracknet, $5, res@tracknet.net ☎ 03-249-7777.

The Hollyford Track is, like the Milford, mostly a valley walk, but this is the only one that takes you right out to the coast. It's a 56-km (35-mile) low-altitude track that can be walked year-round and in either direction. It ends (or begins) at Martins Bay, home of a New Zealand fur seal colony and a group of crested penguins. In addition to the fur seals, highlights include the Hollyford River and the waterfalls. The track isn't as well-defined as the others and isn't serviced, so trampers need to be more self-sufficient; parts of the track are prone to flooding and trampers can be delayed – so carry extra food. There are jet-boat options for the Lake McKerrow section, a portion fondly referred to as the Demon Trail that can, because of the rockiness and undulations, live up to its name. Don't think just the wimps opt for the jet-boat option; in fact, getting onto the river affords you gob-smacking views of the forest. A good transport option is to walk toward the coast, take the jet-boat along the river to Martins Bay and then walk back to the track's beginning, thereby eliminating the cost of a flight in or out.

Typically, the track is done over four days, and one option is to fly to Martins Bay, and then walk back to the Humbolt Creek Car Park (where prearranged transport can pick you up). Alternatively, you can begin at the car park and arrange for a flight out the other end (or walk back, if you're keen). Camping is allowed on the Hollyford, and huts are not booked in advance. Hut fees are $10 per adult per night.

Transport: If you're not on a tight budget, I suggest you fly to Martins Bay and walk back to the car park at Humbolt Creek. For air transport, contact Air Fiordland, $415 for four people, reservations@airfiordland.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7505 or 0800-107-505. Hollyford Track also provides air, boat and bus transport; contact them for details, info@hollyfordtrack.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-3760 or 0800-832-226. Bus transport from Te Anau to the Hollyford track can be arranged through Tracknet, res@tracknet.net, ☎ 03-249-7777, or Trips 'n Tramps, dave@milfordtourswalks.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7081.

The Dusky Track is for more experienced trampers who are prepared to be self-sufficient and handle circumstances as they arise. It's more remote and incurs relatively high transport costs, and at 84 km (52 miles), it takes at least eight days, involves over a dozen three-wire bridge crossings, crosses two mountain ranges and traverses three valleys. If you're prepared and experienced, it is one of the most rewarding tracks in New Zealand. There are a couple of passes, a lot of bush and a lot of swamp. The area around Lake Roe is really beautiful, and, while the track goes to Dusky Sound, you don't see much of the fiord – just across the arm. It's advisable to carry mountain radios; parts of the track are prone to flooding – trampers have been rescued from trees! Huts are not booked in advance, so beds aren't guaranteed, but it's highly unlikely you'll find a crowd. Hut prices are $5 per adult per night.

Transport to the Dusky Track will probably involve an airplane, and Waterwings Airways has daily scheduled flights to Supper Cove during the summer (subject to weather and passenger numbers). waterwings@teanau.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7405. To get to the track, you need to come across either Lake Hauroko or Lake Manapouri, depending on where you want to start your trip. Contact Lake Hauroko Tours ($60) ☎ 03-226-6681.

The Routeburn Track (33 km/20 miles) can be accessed either from the Te Anau end or the Glenorchy end, and is the track that many locals choose as the best. It offers a taste of everything – the western rainforest and moss, lots of time just above or just below the bush line. The birdlife is great on the Routeburn, with lots of robins,

fantails, bell birds, yellowheads and parakeets. This walk goes through both Fiordland and Mt. Aspiring National Parks and has been used as a recreational walk since the 1880s. It takes three days and two nights to complete, but day-walks from either end are reasonable options.

GUIDED OPTIONS

Guided walks include full meal service, transport, and much more posh accommodation than DoC huts. Contact Ultimate Hikes New Zealand, www.ultimatehikes.co.nz, for information on the Milford Track Guided Walk, ☎ 03-441-1138 or 0800-659-255, and the Routeburn Walk Ltd., ☎ 03-442-8200 or 0800-768-832. Prices for guided walks on the Milford range from $1,490 in the low season to $1,750 in the high; on the Routeburn, $950 for low season, $1,090 high. Hollyford Track Guided Walks can be reached at www.hollyfordtrack.co.nz, ☎ 03-442-3760 or 0800-832-226. Prices on the Hollyford range from $1,860 to $2,220, depending on length of walk and transport options.

Other Walks

FROM TE ANAU

Along the Milford Road you will find one of the best short walks in New Zealand – the walk to Key Summit on the Routeburn Track. It's very easily accessible and one of the most brilliant viewpoints in Fiordlands. The track begins about one hour along on the Milford Road from Te Anau and takes 1½ hours to the top, and an hour to get down. If it's a clear day, take a picnic and plan to sit up there for awhile.

A little farther along the Milford Road is the track to Lake Marion – a rocky little hike that is easily followed for about 1½-two hours up. The track crosses the Hollyford River on a swing bridge and travels through a great stand of beech forest to waterfalls before ascending to the lake.

The Gertrude Saddle, accessed a little farther along the Milford Road, takes two hours to reach and offers great views along the length of the Milford Sound.

Guided Day-Walks

One-day guided walks on the Milford Track can be arranged with Trips 'n Tramps, www.milfordtourswalks.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7081, and Milford Track Encounters, www.ultimatehikes.co.nz, ☎ 03-441-1138 or 0800-659-255.

For day- and overnight walks around Manapouri, contact Adventure Manapouri, www.adventuremanapouri.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7111 or 03-249-8070.

Fiordland Guides Ltd. offers full- and half-day nature walks in the Fiordland National Park, as well as overnight camping trips. www.fiordlandguides.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7832.

Gear Rental

Te Anau Sportsworld, www.sportsworldteanau.co.nz, 38 Town Centre, ☎ 03-249-8195, fax 03-249-8023.

Bev's Tramping Gear Hire, www.ubd.co.nz/bevs.hire, 16 Homer Street, ☎/fax 03-249-7389 or 025-223-4214.

◆ On the Road

The Milford Road is one of the world's most scenic driving trips and stretches for 119 km (74 miles) from Te Anau to Milford. Allow yourself eight hours if you are driving yourself and planning to do a scenic boat trip on Milford Sound. Pick up a copy of *Travel Tips for Drivers* from DoC and heed their advice – to avoid traffic congestion, either depart Te Anau before 8 am or after 11 am. The buses depart between 9 and 10 am and most stop at the same places you'll want to visit! There are no fuel stops along the way, so be sure you have a full tank before you set out.

The Mirror Lakes and Knobs Flat are popular stopping points but there are also many other sites and short walks, and over a dozen camping areas. The Homer Tunnel, New Zealand's longest, is 1.2 km (¾ mile) long and was completed in 1953. It was quite a feat of engineering (and no doubt explosives). On the Milford end of the tunnel, the road makes quite a steep descent.

◆ On Horses

High Ride Horse Treks has three trips per day and takes riders along the Whitestone River, offering views of the surrounding area while exploring the countryside. $70 per person. High Ride 4-Wheeler Adventures is another option at the same location, and is a cool way to see the sites. Trips begin on easy farmland and, as your confidence increases, so does the challenge. The best part, though, is the views of the area. www.highride.co.nz, 865 Wilderness Road, ☎ 03-249-8591.

Westray Horse Treks run two-hour rides providing great views. $60 adults, $45 children. agillespie@xtra.co.nz, 55 Ramparts Road, ☎ 03-249-9079 or 027-201-2014.

◆ On the Farm

You can have a good old Kiwi farm experience at Glen Monarch. There are plenty of animals – deer, sheep and cattle – and you can watch sheep shearing, have a tour or watch sheepdogs work. Tours are a minimum of two hours. $45 per person and include morning or afternoon tea. Kakapo Road, ☎ 03-249-7041 or 025-200-0268.

◆ In the Air

You can't appreciate this area unless you see it from both water and sky level – I am astounded at the enormity of the place. The views from above are spectacular and it's worth a wait for the weather to clear before you go up. You can combine flights and boat trips; the options are almost endless with all the operators, so pick your weapon and go for it.

In Te Anau, if you want the the trip of a lifetime, contact Wings & Water and go for a floatplane trip. Trips from 10 minutes to over an hour can be arranged, and prices begin at $65. If you're lucky, you'll be able to get on a trip to pick up trampers in remote huts and sounds. wingsandwater@teanau.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7405.

Southern Lakes Helicopters can get you into places that only exist in your mind. Take as long or as short a trip as you want and remember to breathe. slheli@teanau.co.nz, ☎ 03-249-7167 or 0508-249-7167.

Fixed-wing scenic flights are available through Air Fiordland and can range from 10 minutes to an hour, with prices beginning at $150. www.airfiordland.com, ☎ 03-442-3404 or 0800-103-404.

If you are not staying in Te Anau, take my very favorite trip in New Zealand and fly by helicopter to Milford Sound from Wanaka – you will be amazed and delighted. Contact Wanaka Helicopters, www.heliflights.co.nz, ☎ 03-443-1085.

Where to Stay

◆ Te Anau

The nicest hotel in town is Te Anau Hotel and Villas. It's right on the lake and, in addition to great views, has a swimming pool, spa, and more extras. www.holiday-inn.com, Lakefront Drive, ☎ 03-249-9700 or 0800-223-687 ($$$-$$$$).

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Per room, double occupancy	
$	under NZ$50
$$	NZ$50-$100
$$$	NZ$101-$175
$$$$	over NZ$175

You'll get good value at Anchorage Motel. There are just 14 rooms, some studios, some one- and two-bedroom. www.teanaumotel.co.nz, 47 Quintin Drive, ☎ 03-249-7256 or 0800-180-191 ($$-$$$).

Another dependable, lakefront place to stay is Garden Park Motel. Units are cottage-style and all are non-smoking. www.gardenpark.co.nz, 30 Lakefront Drive, ☎ 03-249-7064 or 0800-246-248 ($$-$$$).

Radford's Lakeview Motel was built in 2000 and is on the lake. There are a variety of room types and all are non-smoking. www.radfordslakeviewmotel.co.nz, 56 Lakefront Drive, ☎ 03-249-9186 or 0800-782-972, fax 03-249-9187 ($$$).

The YHA in town is just a block off the lake and is a friendly and comfortable place to stay. Twin, double and family rooms are available and some have en-suite bathrooms. Very well run and a pleasant staff round out the offerings. www.stayyha.com, 29 Mokonui Street, ☎ 03-249-7847 ($).

The primo holiday park in town is Te Anau Top 10 Mountain View. It's very well-done and comfortable, with little extras that you don't always find. All rooms in the new (2003) Matai Lodge have bath and there's a common room; there are also cabins, units with bath and kitchen, campervan and tent sites. www.teanautop10.co.nz, 128 Te Anau Terrace, ☎ 03-249-7462 or 0800-249-746, fax 03-249-7262 ($-$$$).

Te Anau Great Lakes Holiday Park is the newest holiday park in town and closest to the town center, which also means farthest from the lake. But it is new, clean and modern and has motels, cabins, units with bath and dorm rooms. www.teanaugreatlakes.co.nz, cor-

ner Luxmore Drive & Milford Road, ☎ 03-249-8538 or 0800-249-555 ($-$$$).

◆ Milford Sound

The only place to stay in Milford Sound is the Milford Sound Lodge. There are only 24 backpacker rooms, though, so book early if you want to be in Milford Sound, right on the edge of the river. milford.sound.lodge@xtra.co.nz, SH94, Milford Sound, ☎ 03-249-8071 fax 03-249-8075 ($).

◆ Manapouri

For an historic place to stay, try Murrell's Grand View House, which has been owned by the same family and run as a guest house since 1889. All the extras – bathrobes, fresh fruit, full breakfast, big gardens – are there. www.murrells.co.nz, 7 Murrell Avenue, ☎ 03-249-6642, fax 03-249-6966 ($$$$).

Manapouri Lakeview Motor Inn may not be anything fancy, but has all levels of accommodation and a great location looking out over the lake. Café and bar on-site and all rooms (including backpackers) have en-suite bathrooms. www.manapouri.com, 68 Cathedral Drive, ☎/fax 03-249-6652 ($-$$).

Chalets at Manapouri Lakeview Motel and Motor Park are hand-built and have interesting, quirky features (including one that is in ¾-scale). There is a big Penny Arcade-like game room as well as cabins, motels, tourist apartments and sites for tents. www.ubd-online.co.nz/manapourilakeview, fjordland@xtra.co.nz, 50 Manapouri-Te Anau Road, ☎ 03-249-6642, fax 03-249-6699 ($-$$).

Where to Eat in Te Anau

Redcliff Café has great food, good drinks and a fabulous atmosphere. 12 Mokonui Street, ☎ 03-249-7431 ($$).

La Toscana is a good choice, especially if you're in the mood for pizza or pasta. Takeouts and deliveries are available, too. 108 Town Centre ($-$$).

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée	
$	under NZ$10
$$	NZ$10-$20
$$$	NZ$21-$30
$$$$	over NZ$30

Maori Language

Some pointers: each syllable in Maori ends in a vowel and they are always pronounced.

The vowels are: a (as in path), e (as in pain or pen), i (as in feet or fit), o (as in foe or forest) and u (as in boot or put). When two vowels are together, they each have a sound, but the sounds are run together.

The consonants are h, k, m, n, p, r, t and w. “ng” is pronounced “ing” and “wh” is usually pronounced as an “f,” but in some regions it is pronounced as a “w.”

There is no word in Maori for “very” so place names that are repeats of the same word mean very whatever. For instance rata means red, if you found a river called Rata Rata, that would mean the river is very red.

Aotearoa	Land of the long white cloud; the Maori name for New Zealand
Kia Ora	Hello
Haere mai	Welcome
Tena koe	How do you do?
Haere ra	Goodbye
Ara	Path
Awa	River
Haka or as a warning.	Ritual dance and chant as a welcome
Hongi	Maori greeting where the noses touch. You breathe the same air.
Iwi	Tribe
Hapu	A sub-tribe
Kai	Food
Koha	Gift
Mana	Authority, influence, prestige
Marae	A gathering place
Maunga	Mountain
Moana	Sea
Moko	Facial tattoos incorporating Maori designs and motifs. Traditionally worn only by important Maoris.

O	The place of
Pakeha	Non-Maori people
Rangi	Sky
Roto	Lake
Tangata whenua	The people of the land
Tangi	Funeral
Taonga	Values (spiritual, personal and physical), treasures.
Tapu	Sacred
Te	The
Te Reo	The Maori language
Wai	Water
Whakapapa	Geneology
Whare	House or hut
Whare nui	Meeting house
Whanau	Family or extended family group
Whenua	Land

Kiwi English

New Zealand English may very well sound different from what you're accustomed to hearing – it's a tough accent to hear through in the beginning.

Some Tips

There is very little accent in Kiwi English – words are pronounced rather flatly, especially at the end of the word. For instance, Coromandel is pronounced "Coromandl" not "Coroman-dell."

The "i" and the "e" will get to you – the word "sick" might sound like "seek."

The letter "r" is a wacky one – it is pronounced like "ah" in words where it exists and added to the ends of words where it doesn't exist at all. For instance, "hard" is pronounced "hahd," and America is often pronounced, "Americker." Where the "r" is pronounced like "ah," just pretend you're from Boston.

Words like "pasta and Mazda" are pronounced like the "a" in pack, not "pah-sta." But tomato is pronounced "tomahto."

The double letter "tt" is crisp, not dull the way North Americans say it. For instance, my name is Bette, pronounced with crisp "t's" not "d's."

There are a few funny words in Kiwi English and a few funny words in American English that will make a Kiwi blush or laugh. My favorite is what you might call a "fanny pack." Call it a "bum bag" in New Zealand – a fanny refers to a part of a woman's body where she would be very unlikely to carry a pack.

Some Words & Expressions

Back block	A remote piece of land used for farming
Blow that for a joke	"It's not funny"
Box of birds	Feeling fine, fit and healthy. Also "box of fluffy ducks."
Bring a plate	Bring a plate of food to a party
Cheers	It's fine or thank you
Chilly bin	Insulated ice chest
Chocker	Or "chock a block" – no room left
Crook	Feeling unwell or sick
Flat tack	To go fast
Four by two	The size of a piece of timber (not two by four)
Gidday	As in "good day"
Grog	Alcohol
Hard case	Eccentric, funny, goofy
Jandals	Flip-flops ("Japanese sandals")
Paddock	Field
PYO	Pick your own (tomatoes, berries)
She'll be right, mate	Everything is going to be fine
Shout	Buy your friends a drink or meal
Smoko	Coffee or tea break
Togs	Bathing or swimming suit
Tucker	Food
What a dag	What a character
Wop-wops	Out in the country, miles from anywhere

And one of my all-time favorites:

He doesn't know if he's Arthur or Martha.
He's really confused.

Index

Abel Tasman National Park, 252-258
Accommodations, 39-41; Abel Tasman National Park, 256-257; Ahipara, 89; Alexandra, 392; Aoraki/Mt. Cook, 342; Arrowtown, 374; Auckland, 61-63; Baylys Beach, 81; Blenheim, 225-226; Christchurch, 314; Clyde, 392; Collingwood, 252; cost, 38ff; Cromwell, 391; Dansey's Pass, 398; Dargaville, 80; Dunback, 396; Dunedin, 349; Far North, 89, 93; Fiordland, 426-427; Fox Glacier, 298; Franz Josef, 296; Greymouth, 283; Haast, 301-302; Hamilton, 111; Havelock, 230; Hector, 273; Hokianga, 85; Hokitika, 286; Hurunui, 327; Kaikoura, 322; Karamea, 273; Kauri Coast, 78, 80, 81, 85, 87; Kerikeri, 97; Lake Tekapo, 338; Mackenzie Country, 338; Manapouri, 427; Marahau, 257; Martinborough, 199; Matakohe, 78; Milford Sound, 427; Motueka, 244; Murchison, 264; Napier, 171; Naseby, 398; Nelson, 240; Oamaru, 404; Ohakune, 162; Okarito, 290; Omarama, 407; Otago Peninsula, 358; Otaki, 203; Paihia, 103; Palmerston North, 180; Picton, 219-220; Punakaiki, 279; Queen Charlotte Track, 214-217; Queenstown, 371; Ranfurly, 396; Rapahoe, 280; ratings, 42; Rawene, 87; Reefton, 271; Ross, 290; Rotorua, 132-133; Roxburgh, 392; Russell, 103; St. Arnaud, 264; St. Bathans, 400; Selwyn District, 332; Takaka, 248; Taupo, 148; Te Anau, 426; Tongariro National Park, 157; Turangi, 152; types, 38; Waiheke Island, 71; Waitomo, 117; Wanaka, 386; Wellington, 190; Westport, 276
Adventures, 42-49
Ahipara, 87-94
Ahuriri, 172-173
Air adventures, 48; Aoraki/Mt. Cook, 341; Auckland, 59; Bay of Islands, 101; Fiordland, 425; Greymouth, 282; Hanmer, 326; Hawke's Bay, 166; Marlborough, 222; Motueka, 244; Nelson, 236; Ohakune, 161; Queenstown, 369; Rotorua, 131; Taupo, 145; Tekapo, 338; Tongariro, 156; Wanaka, 383; West Coast, 286
Air Force Museums, Ohakea, 171; Wanaka, 385
Airlines, 25
Alexandra, 391
Aoraki/Mt. Cook, 339-342
Arrowtown, 373-375
Arthur's Pass National Park, 334
Auckland, 51-65; accommodations, 61-63; adventures, 58-59; Central City, 56-65; getting around, 57; getting here, 54-55; information, 55; maps, 52, 556; north of Auckland, 65-67; restaurants, 63-65; sightseeing, 60

Ballooning: Canterbury, 311; Queenstown, 369
Barrytown, 280
Baylys Beach, 81
Bay of Islands, 95-108
Beaches: Ahipara, 85; Auckland, 58; Golden Bay, 247; Himatangi, 177; Ninety Mile, 88; north of Auckland, 66; Otaki, 202; Rabbit Island, 236; sand tobogganing, 88; Tahunanui, 236; White's Bay, 222
Beer, 32; Canterbury, 347; Dunedin, 347; Nelson, 237; Wanaka, 385

Biking, see Mountain biking
Birds, 12-13; Arthur's Pass, 331; Cape Kidnappers, 167; Christchurch, 310; Craigieburn, 330; Farewell Spit, 249; Fiordland, 413; Kapiti Island, 205; Karori Sanctuary, 187; Manawatu Estuary, 177; Muriwai Beach, 66; Nga Manu, 204; Otago, 354; Paparoa National Park, 278; Picton, 219; Routeburn Track, 419-423; Te Anau, 413; Tiritiri Matangi, 66; white heron sanctuary, 289-290
Boating: Abel Tasman Park, 253; Auckland, 58; Haast, 300; Lake Taupo, 139-141; Lake Wanaka, 378; Milford Sound, 414; Paihia, 99; Picton, 211-212; Punting on the Avon, 310; Rotorua, 127-128; Te Anau, 413; Timaru, 337; see also Jet-boating
Bungy jumping, 49; Queenstown, 367; Taupo, 145

Camping, 41
Canoeing: Hokitika, 285; Ohakune, 160; Punakaiki, 278; river grades, 46; see also Kayaking
Canterbury, 305-342; Aoraki/Mt. Cook, 339-342; Central South Island, 333-334; Christchurch, 306-315; Hurunui, 323-328; Kaikoura, 316-323; Mackenzie Country, 335-342; map, 304; Selwyn District, 329-332
Canyoning: north of Auckland, 67; Queenstown, 363; Wanaka, 379
Cape Brett, 101
Cape Farewell, 251
Cape Kidnappers, 167
Cape Reinga/Te Rerenga Wairua, 91-93
Car rental, 27; driving tips, 28
Caving: Ngarua, 246; Oparara Valley, 272; Rawhiti, 247; Waitomo, 116
Central Plateau, 137-162; getting here, 137; information, 138; map, 142
Central South Island, 333-334
Chocolate making, 347
Christchurch, 306-323; accommodations, 314; adventures, 310-312; getting here, 308; information, 309; restaurants, 315; sightseeing, 312-313
Clyde , 392-393
Collingwood, 249-252
Craigieburn Forest Park, 330-331
Cromwell, 390-391
Curling, 397
Customs and duty-free, 24

Dansey's Pass, 398
Dargaville, 79-81
Diving: Paihia, 99; Picton, 213; Tutukaka, 105
Dolphins, 16; Haast, 302; Kaikoura, 319; Paihia, 99; Picton, 219
Doubtful Sound, 416
Doubtless Bay, 94
Driving tips, 28
Dunback, 396
Dunedin, 343-353; accommodations, 349-353; adventures, 346-347; getting here, 344-345; information, 345; restaurants, 353; sightseeing, 347-348
Duntroon, 405

Emergency contacts, 22, 413

Fairwell Spit, 249-252
Farms: Blenheim, 212; Fiordland, 413; Queenstown, 357; Rotorua, 121; Waitomo, 109
Far North, 87-89
Fauna, 11-18
Fergusons Bush, 288
Film, 22
Fiordland, 409-427; accommodations, 426-427; adventures, 413-425; emergency services, 413; getting here, 412; information, 413; map, 408; national park, 411; restaurants, 427
Fishing: Ahipara, 88; Dargaville, 79; Fiordland, 418; Foxton, 177; Hokianga, 85; Kaikoura, 325; Lake Taupo, 141; Moeraki, 397; Paihia, 100; Picton, 213; Rotorua, 129; Temuka, 334; Turangi, 151; Wanaka, 379

Flora, 10; kauri forests, 82; kauri gum, 77; Nikau palm, 248; rice grass, 79
Food, 31; see also Restaurants
Fossils, 406
Fox Glacier, 297-298; accommodations, 298; adventures, 297; information, 297; restaurants, 298
Foxton, 177
Franz Josef Glacier, 295-297; accommodations, 298; adventures, 296; information, 295; restaurants, 297

Geothermals: Hanmer Springs, 324-327; Lake Taupo area, 147-148; Maruia Springs, 328; Rotorua, 124-125
Geraldine, 333-334
Glaciers: Fox, 297-298; Franz Josef, 295-297; to Haast, 299; Hokitika to, 287; Rob Roy, 381
Glenorchy, 372
Glow-worms, 117; Te Anau, 414; Waiomio, 101, 105; Waitomo, 115-117
Golden Bay, 246-249
Gold mining: Ross, 287-288; Shantytown, 283-284
Golf: Hawke's Bay, 168; Paraparaumu, 204
Greymouth, 280-283

Haast, 301-304
Haast Pass, 302-304
Hamilton, 110-114
Hanmer Springs, 324-327
Hastings, 156
Hauraki Gulf Islands, 68-72
Havelock, 227-230
Hawke's Bay, 163-174; getting here, 163; information, 164; Napier, 164-173
Health concerns, 21; amoebic meningitis, 119; giardia, 21
Heaphy Track, 259, 271
Hector, 272-273
Herekino Gorge, 87
Hiking, see Tramping; Walking
Himatangi Beach, 177
Hobbiton, 114
Hokianga Harbour, 84-86
Hokitika, 284-287
Holidays and festivals, 34-36
Horowhenua, 177
Horse races, Kumara, 284
Horse trekking, 48; Bushman's, 288; Cape Farewell, 251; Christchurch, 311; Fiordland, 424-425; Foxton, 177; Hurunui, 326; Kaikoura, 321; Lake Taupo area, 145; Mackenzie Country, 338; Martinborough, 197; Muriwai, 67; Nelson, 237; Punakaiki, 279; Queenstown, 366; Tongariro, 155; Wanaka, 384
Huka Falls, 139-141
Hurunui, 323-328
Hutt Valley, 192-194; map, 182

Inangahua earthquake slip, 270
Inangahua Valley, 270

Jackson Bay Road, 293
Jet-boating, 47; Haast, 300; Hurunui, 325; Lake Taupo, 141; Manawatu Gorge, 178; Queenstown, 362; Selwyn District, 331

Kahurangi National Park, 244, 246, 258
Kaikoura, 316-323
Kaimanawa Forest Park, 151-152
Kaitaia, 89-94
Kaiteriteri, 253, 254, 257
Kapiti Coast, 200-206
Kapiti Island Nature Reserve, 205
Karamea, 273
Karori Wildlife Sanctuary, 187
Kauri Coast, 77-87
Kauri forests, 82-83
Kawau Island, 88
Kayaking, 47; Abel Tasman Park, 253; Aoraki/Mt. Cook, 340; Fiordland, 417; Hamilton, 114; Havelock, 228; Hokianga, 85; Hokitika, 285; Lake Taupo, 141; Lake Tekapo, 337; Manawatu Gorge, 177; Motueka, 244; Oamaru, 403; Okarito, 290; Otago Peninsula, 355; Otaki, 202; Paihia, 100; Picton, 211;

Rotorua, 127; Wanaka, 378; Wellington, 186
Kenepuru Sound, 216, 230
Kerikeri, 96-98
Kids, travel with, 33
Korowai/Torlesse Tussocklands Park, 330
Koru, 11
Kumara, 284

Lake Ianthe, 288
Lake Matheson, 298
Lake Rotorua, 127
Lake Taupo, 139-141
Lake Tekapo, 336-337
Language: Kiwi English, 429-431; Maori, 428
Larnach Castle, 357
Lawrence, 393
Lewis Pass, 328

Macetown, 374
Mackenzie Country, 335-342; accommodations, 338, 342; Aoraki/Mt. Cook, 339-342; restaurant, 338, 342
Manapouri, 416-417, 424, 427
Manawatu, 175-177
Manawatu Estuary, 177
Manawatu Gorge, 178-179
Mangawhai, 108
Maniototo, 394-399
Maori people, 5, 73, 87, 91, 313; Kaikoura, 316, 321; language, 428; museums, 106, 184, 305; rock carvings, 140; rock paintings, 405; Rotorua, 120-121, 124; Wairakei Terraces, 146; Waitangi Treaty Grounds, 95, 102
Maps: Auckland, 52; Auckland Central City, 56; Canterbury, 304; Central Plateau, 142; Central West Coast, 112; Fiordland, 408; Hawke's Bay, 166; Hutt Valley and Wellington, 182; Marlborough, 210; Nelson to Cape Farewell, 232; Marlborough 210; Northern Alps, 266; Northland, 74; Otago, 350; Rotorua, 122; Southern Alps; Wellington City, 195
Mapua, 242
Marahau, 252-255, 257
Marble Mountain, 246
Marine mammals, 15-18
Marlborough, 207-230; Blenheim, 221-227; getting here, 208; Havelock & West, 227-230; information, 209; map, 210; Picton, 211-221
Martinborough, 196-199
Matakohe, 78
Matiu/Somes Island, 186
Matukituki Valley, 379-381
Maungawhau/Mt. Eden, 61
Milford Road, 413
Milford Sound, 414-415, 427
Milford Track, 419-421
Moeraki, 400-401
Money, 37-38; exchange, 38; prices, 37, 38; taxes, 38; tipping, 38
Motueka, 243-246
Mountain biking, 48; Central Otago, 388; Christchurch, 312; Hanmer Forest, 326; Lake Taupo, 144; Napier, 166; Naseby Forest, 397; Ohakune, 161; Oparara Valley, 272-273; Queen Charlotte Track, 218; Queenstown, 365; Rotorua, 129; Takaka, 248; Tongariro, 155; Wanaka, 384; Woodhill Forest, 67
Mountain-boarding, 146
Mount Aspiring National Park, 378
Mount Cook (Aoraki), 339-342
Mount John Lookout, 337
Mount Ruapehu, 152-157
Mount Tarawera volcano, 131-132
Mount Victoria, 65, 184
Murchison, 263-264

Napier, 164-174; accommodations, 171-172; adventures, 166-171; information, 165; restaurants, 173-174; sightseeing, 171
Naseby, 396-398
National parks, 8
Nelson, 231-264; accommodations, 240-241; adventures, 236-238; getting here, 234; information, 235; map, 232; restaurants, 242; sightseeing, 239-240

Nelson Lakes National Park, 261-263
New Zealand: climate, 8-9; economy, 5; fauna, 11-18; flora, 10; geography, 6-8; government, 4; history, 2-3; national parks, 8; people and culture, 5
Nga Manu Nature Reserve, 2044
Ngunguru, 106
Ninety Mile Beach, 90-91
Northland, 73-108; Bay of Islands, 95-98; Far North, 87-94; getting here, 76; information, 76; Kauri Coast, 77-87; map, 74

Oamaru, 402-405
Ohakune, 159-162
Okarito, 290
Omarama, 406
Oneroa, 69
Oparara Valley, 272-273
Otago, 343-408; Arrowtown, 373-375; Central, 393-388; Coastal, 400-402; Dunedin, 343-353; Maniototo, 394-400; map, 350; Oamaru, 402-405; Peninsula, 354-359; Queenstown, 359-372; Roxburgh Valley, 392-393; Waitaki, 405-407; Wanaka, 375-387
Otaki, 202-203
Oturehua, 399

Paihia, 98-105
Palmerston North, 177-181
Paparoa National Park, 277-279
Paragliding: Nelson, 236; Queenstown, 370
Paraparaumu, 204-205
Pelorus Bridge, 228
Penguins: Auckland, 58; Haast, 300; Oamaru, 403; Otago Peninsula, 354, 356-357; Shag Point, 400
Picton, 211-221; accommodations, 219-220; adventures, 211-219; restaurants, 221
Portobello, 354-359
Punakaiki, 277-280

Quads/4x4s: Ahipara, 88; Aoraki/Mt. Cook, 341; Dargaville, 79; Fiordland, 424; Greymouth, 282; Manawatu, 179; Martinborough, 197; Nelson, 236; Queenstown, 367; Taupo, 146; Wanaka, 385; Westport, 276
Queen Charlotte Track, 213-218
Queenstown, 359-372; accommodations, 371-372; adventures, 361-370; getting here, 360; information, 361; restaurants, 372; sightseeing, 370

Rabbit Island, 236
Rafting, 46; Greymouth, 282; Hokitika, 285; Hurunui, 325; Murchison, 262; Otaki, 202; Paparoa National Park, 278; Queenstown, 362; Rangitata, 334; Rotorua, 127; Waitomo, 116; West Coast, 289
Ranfurly, 396
Rangitata Gorge, 310-11, 334
Rangitoto, 69
Rapahoe, 280
Raurimu Spiral, 156
Rawene, 86-87
Reefton, 270-271
Restaurants: Abel Tasman Park, 258; Alexandra, 392; Aoraki/Mt. Cook, 342; Arrowtown, 375; Auckland, 63-64; Baylys Beach, 81; Blenheim, 227; Christchurch, 315; Clyde, 393; Collingwood, 252; Cromwell, 391; Dargaville, 81; drinks, 32; Dunedin, 353; Fiordland, 427; food, 31; Fox Glacier, 298; Franz Josef, 297; Greymouth, 283; Haast, 302; Hamilton, 111, 115; Havelock, 230; Hokianga, 86; Hokitika, 290; Hurunui, 328; Kaikoura, 323; Kaitaia, 94; Karamea, 273; Kerikeri, 98; Mackenzie Country, 338; Mapua, 243; Martinborough, 199; Moeraki, 402; Motueka, 246; Murchison, 264; Napier, 173; Naseby, 398; Nelson, 242; Oamaru, 405; Ohakune, 162; Otago Peninsula, 359; Paihia, 104; Palmerston North, 181; Picton, 221; Pukekura, 291; Punakaiki, 280;

Queenstown, 372; Reefton, 271; Ross, 290; Rotorua, 134; Russell, 105; Selwyn District, 332; Takaka, 249; Taupo, 150; Tongariro, 158; Waiheke Island, 71; Waikanae Beach, 204; Waitomo, 118; Wanaka, 387; Wellington, 191; Westport, 276; Whataroa, 291
Rimutaka Forest Park, 193
River grades, 46
Rob Roy Glacier, 381
Ross, 280, 282
Rotorua, 119-134; accommodations, 132; adventures, 120-131; getting here, 119; gondola and rides, 131; information, 120; map, 122; restaurants, 134; sightseeing, 131
Roxburgh Valley, 393-394
Russell, 98-105

Sailing, 47; Abel Tasman Park, 253; Paihia, 99
St. Arnaud, 262-263
St. Bathans, 399
Seals, 17; Abel Tasman Park, 253; Kaikoura, 318-319; Westport, 275
Selwyn District, 329-333
Shag Point, 400-401
Shantytown, 283-284
Sheep, 107, 130
Skiing: Mt. Ruapehu, 156; Ohakune, 159
Skydiving, 48; Motueka, 244; Queenstown, 369; Taupo, 145
Sounds (fiords), 409
Spas: Paihia, 102; Rotorua, 126
Surfing: Christchurch, 310; Kaikoura, 312
Swimming: Christchurch, 310; Lake Taupo, 139; Napier, 166; Pelorus Bridge, 228; Wainui Falls, 240; Wanaka, 378; West Coast warning, 257

Takaka, 246-249
Taupo, 139-150
Taupo Volcanic Zone, 137
Te Anau Wildlife Centre, 413; accommodations, 426; restaurants, 427; walking, 423
Telephones, 29
Te Mata Trust Park, 166
Timaru, 333-334
Tiritiri Matangi, 68
Tokaanu, 150-152
Tongariro National Park, 152-158
Trains: Kingston Flyer, 368; Raurimu Spiral, 156; Taieri Gorge, 348; TranzAlpine, 329-330; TranzScenic, 27
Tramping, 43-45; Abel Tasman Track, 255; Alex Knob Track, 296; Aoraki/Mt. Cook, 340; backcountry hut categories, 45; Caples Track, 364; Copland Track, 301; Croesus Track, 279-280; Dusky Track, 422; Great Walks, 44; Greenstone Track, 364; Heaphy Track, 259; Hollyford Track, 421; Kaikoura Coast Track, 321; Kepler Track, 420; Lake Tekapo area, 337; Milford Track, 419; Mount Roy Track, 380; Nydia Track, 229; Queen Charlotte Track, 213-218; Roberts Point Track, 296; Routeburn Track, 422
Travel information, 19-49; airlines, 25; communications, 29-30; customs and duty-free, 24; foreign consulates, 24; getting around, 26-28; getting here, 25; at a glance, 19; health concerns, 21; holidays and festivals, 34-36; kids, 33; money, 37; opening hours, 31; packing tips, 22; postal services, 31; visas, 24; when to go, 20
Trounson Kauri Park, 76
Turangi, 150-152
Tutukaka, 105

Victoria Forest Park, 270
Visas, 24

Waiheke Island, 69-72
Waikanae, 203-206
Waikato, 109-118
Wainui Falls, 248

Waiomio, 97-98
Waipara Valley, 318-319
Waipoua Forest, 76
Wairarapa, 186
Wairere Boulders Nature Park, 79-80
Waitakere Park, 61
Waitaki, 405-407
Waitangi, 95
Waitangi Treaty Grounds, 102
Waitomo, 115-118
Walking, 43-45; Ahipara, 88; Auckland, 59; Cape Reinga, 92; Dunedin, 346; Fiordland, 418-424; on glaciers, 285-286, 288, 289-290; Great Walks, 44; guided walks, 45; Hanmer Forest, 325; Hokitika, 286; Hutt Valley, 193; Kaikoura, 320; Lake Taupo, 144; Manawatu Gorge, 179; Nelson, 236; Nelson Lakes Park, 262; Ninety Mile Beach, 92; Ohakune, 161; Otago Peninsula, 354; Otaki, 202; Paparoa National Park, 279; Pelorus Bridge, 228; Queenstown, 364; Rotorua, 129; Roxburgh, 394; Russell, 101; Selwyn District, 330; Tongariro National Park, 151-152; Turangi, 151; Wanaka, 380; Wellington, 186; Westport, 275; see also Tramping
Wallabies, 68
Wanaka, 375-387; accommodations, 386; adventures, 378-385; getting here, 377; information, 377; restaurants, 387; sightseeing, 385-386
Wellington, 183-206; accommodations, 190; adventures, 186-187; getting here, 184-185; Hutt Valley, 192-194; information, 185-186; map, 182; Martinborough, 196-199; restaurants, 191; sightseeing, 188-189
West Coast, 265-304; getting here, 269; information, 269; map/northern, 266; map/southern, 268
Westport, 274-276
Whakapapa Village, 157-159
Whales, 16; Kaikoura, 316-317
Whangarei, 106
Whataroa, 288-291
White's Bay, 222
Wine, 33; Blenheim, 222; Central Otago, 389; Hawke's Bay, 169-170; Kaikoura, 326-327; Kaitaia, 92; Kerikeri, 97; Martinborough, 197; Matakana-Warkworth road, 107; Nelson, 237; north of Auckland, 67; Waiheke Island, 70; Waipara Valley, 326; Wanaka, 385